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FROM

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THE UP GRADE

"The candle in the niche behind her cast a dim light over the soft curves of Jean's cheeks"

FRONTISPIECE. *See page 304*

THE UP GRADE

BY

WILDER GOODWIN

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
CHARLES GRUNWALD

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
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TO MY MOTHER
MAUD WILDER GOODWIN

ILLUSTRATIONS

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THE UP GRADE

CHAPTER I

STEPHEN LORING sat on the edge of the sidewalk, his feet in the gutter. He was staring vacantly at the other side of the street, completely oblivious of his surroundings. No one would select a Phœnix sidewalk as an attractive resting-place, unless, like Loring, he were compelled by circumstances over which he had ceased to have control.

"Here, 'Hombre'! How are you stacking up? Do you want a job?"

With an uncertain "Yes," Loring arose from the sidewalk, before looking at the man who addressed him. Turning, he saw a brisk, sandy whiskered man about forty-five years of age, who fairly beamed with efficiency, and whose large protruding eyes seemed to see in every direction at once.

The questioner looked only for a second at the man before him. The face told its own story — the story of a man who had quit. The

tired eyes half apologized for the lines beneath them.

"Easterner," decided the prospective employer, "since he wears a belt and not suspenders." The stranger extended his hand in an energetic manner, and continued: "My name is McKay. The Quentin Mining Company, up in the hills, want men. They sent me down to round up a few. You are the forty-first man, and the boss bet me that I would only get forty."

Loring's head was still swimming as the result of a period of drunkenness which only lack of funds had brought to a close. By way of answer he merely nodded wearily and murmured: "My name is Loring."

His taciturnity in no wise discouraged his interlocutor, for the latter paused merely to wipe the perspiration from his forehead with a handkerchief which might possibly once have been white. Then, slipping his arm through Loring's, he went on with his communications: "The boss bet me I would lose half the men I got, but they will have their troubles trying to lose me. Come right along down to the station! I have them all corralled there with a friend

watching them. I don't suppose you have such a hell of a lot of packing to do," he drawled, looking at Loring's disheveled apparel with a comprehending smile. "I went broke myself once in 'Frisco. Why, Phœnix is a gold mine for opportunities compared with that place! I 'll set you up to a drink now. There is nothing like it to clear your head."

During this running fire of talk, McKay had convoyed Loring to a saloon. The proprietor was sitting listlessly behind a roulette wheel, idly spinning it, the while he made imaginary bets with himself on the results, and was seemingly as elated or depressed as if he had really won or lost money. Observing the entrance of the two men, he rose and sauntered over behind the bar.

"What will you have, gents?"

"I guess about two whiskies," answered McKay. "Will you have something with us?"

"Well, I don't mind if I do take a cigar," answered the barkeeper, as, after pouring their drink, he stretched his arm into the dirty glass case. Then he aimed an ineffectual blow with a towel at the flies on the dirty mirror, and returned to his wheel.

McKay wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and licked the last drops of whisky from his mustache. Then again taking Loring by the arm, he stepped out into the street. The heat, as they walked toward the railroad tracks, was terrific. The dusty stretch of road which led to the station shimmered with the glare. No one who could avoid it moved. In the shade of the buildings, the dogs sprawled limply. Now and then riders passed at a slow gait, the horses a mass of lather and dusty sweat. One poor animal loped by, driven on by spur, with head down, and tail too dejected to switch off the flies.

Loring watched him. "I think," he mused, "that that poor horse feels as I do. Only he has not the alleviating satisfaction of knowing that he is to blame for it himself."

The station platform was crowded with battered specimens of Mexican peons, chattering in high-pitched, slurred syllables. Their swarthy faces immeasurably irritated Stephen. Three white men, standing a little apart, looked rather scornfully at the crowd. The only difference in their appearance, however, was that while each of the white men had two suspenders,

the overalls of each of the Mexicans were supported by only one. It would have been hard to gather together a more bedraggled set of men than these were; but McKay counted them with loving pride.

"Forty-one! All here! he exclaimed. "Hop aboard the train, boys; we're off!"

"Railway fare comes out of your first two days' work," he exclaimed cheerfully to Loring.

The train was of the "mixed" type that crawls about the southwest. A dingy, battered, passenger coach trailed at the end of a long line of freight cars, which were labeled for the most part with the white circle and black cross of the "Atcheson, Topeka and Santa Fé." The men scrambled aboard, the engine grunted lazily, protestingly, and the long train slowly started. Until the train was well under way, McKay stood with his broad back against the door, his hand lying nonchalantly but significantly on a revolver beneath his vest, then, with a contented smile, he dropped into a seat.

Loring had no hat. In Arizona, a man may go without his trousers, and be called eccentric. To go without a hat is ungentlemanly. Consequently the three other white men whom

McKay had collected kept themselves aloof, and Stephen, crawling into a seat beside a voluble Chinaman, dozed off in misery, wondering whether the murmuring buzz that he heard was in his head, or in the car wheels. The Chinaman looked down at Stephen's unshaven face and matted hair, and grinned pleasantly.

"He allee samee broke," he murmured to himself, crooning with pleasure.

For six hours the train had been plowing its way across the desert, backing, stopping, groaning, wheezing. The blue line of the hills seemed little nearer than in the morning. Only the hills behind seemed farther away. Now and then, far out in the sage-brush, a film of dust hung low in the air, telling of some sheep outfit driving to new grazing lands. On the side of the train next Loring, a trail followed the line of the telegraph poles. Wherever the trail crossed the track and ran for a while on the opposite side, Stephen felt a childish anger at it, for otherwise he could amuse himself by counting the skeletons of horses and cattle, which every mile or so made splatches of pure white against the gray white of the dust. The passengers slouched in the hot seats, rolling count-

less cigarettes with the dexterity which marks the Southwesterner, drawing the string of the "Durham" sack with a quick jerk of the teeth, at the close of the operation. The air of the car reeked with smoke. At each little station-shed new men joined the crowd, being received with looks of silent sympathy and invariably proffering a request for the "makings." When this was received, they resignedly settled on the torn black leather of the seats, trying to accomplish the impossible feat of resting their necks on the edge of the backs without cramping their legs against the seats in front of them.

The train stopped suddenly with a jerk which was worse than usual, as if the engine had stumbled over itself. The brakeman, a target for many jests, hurried through the car.

"What have we stopped for now?" drawled McKay. "To enjoy the scenic effect?"

"Horse runned along ahead of the engine and bust his leg in the trestle," laconically answered the brakeman.

"The son-of-a-gun! Now, the critter showed durned poor judgment, did n't he?"

The brakeman swore mildly, and disappeared. In a few minutes he returned, carefully spat in

the empty stove, and the train casually moved on again.

Seeing a paper lying in the aisle, as he walked down the car, the brakeman stooped and picked it up. His eye fell upon a large red seal, and much elaborate writing. With a puzzled expression he read the document.

"UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

"To all whom these presents may concern, Greeting. I, the undersigned, Secretary of State, of the United States of America, hereby request all whom it may concern to permit — Stephen Loring — a citizen of the United States, safely and freely to pass, and in case of need to give him all lawful aid and protection."

"It must be a passport," he thought. "First one I ever seed, though. I wonder who might Stephen Loring be."

His eye fell upon the appended description:

"Age, 23 yrs., 4 mos.	Mouth, Wide.
Stature, 6 ft. 1.	Chin, Medium.
Forehead, Broad.	Hair, Black.
Eyes, Brown.	Complexion, Ruddy.
Nose, Irregular.	Face, Square."

He looked about at the men in the car until his eye fell on Stephen.

"That 's him, all right," he thought. "I should say it would be sort of inconvenient to have such a good description to fill!"

He went to Stephen and touched him on the shoulder. "Hey, stranger, I reckon this belongs to you."

Loring, surprised, took the proffered paper. Then he felt in the pocket of his coat.

"I think it must have fallen out of my pocket. Much obliged!" he exclaimed.

It was an old passport, expired ten years since, but Stephen carried it about with him as a means of identification in case of accident.

"How did you know that this was mine?" he asked the brakeman from idle curiosity.

The man pointed with an exceedingly dirty thumb to the description.

"I ain't no detective, but I reckon that fits pretty well." Then he nodded to Loring and walked away.

Loring glanced idly at the passport as it lay open on his knee. As he did so he wondered what the friends who knew him ten years back, at the time when that document was issued, would say to his appearance now. "Wild oats gone to seed. I guess that about describes me,"

he murmured, with a grim smile, as he folded the passport and slipped it back into the frayed lining of his pocket. Dissipation and wreck do not change the color of a man's eyes, the shape of his forehead or the outline of his face, so that it had still been possible to recognize Loring by his old passport. Had it been a description of his personality instead of his measurements, no one could have recognized the original. Mathematically it is but the difference of an inch from a retreating chin to one thrust forward; artistically a very slight touch will turn frank eyes into hopeless ones; philosophically the turning of the corners of the lips downward instead of upward may change the whole viewpoint of life. Experience is mathematician, artist, and philosopher combined, and it had accomplished all these changes in Stephen Loring.

Through the parting kindness of friends, most of the men had some food, which they proceeded to chew with noisy satisfaction. Loring began to feel cravings. The Chinaman beside him was gnawing at a huge ham sandwich with a very green pickle protruding from between the edges of the bread. He eyed Lor-

ing, then turned to him and asked: "You hab bite? My name Hop Wah. I go cook for the outfit. Me heap fine cook," solemnly added the celestial.

Loring gratefully shared the food.

The men in the car, who until now had been rather morose and silent, began to cheer up, and to sing noisily. Loring lazily wondered why, until he saw several black bottles passed promiscuously about. McKay handed his own flask to Loring.

"Have another drink!" he said, "there is nothing like it for a hang-over."

Loring took a deep pull at the flask.

"Hey, Chink, have some?" continued McKay.

Wah smiled and shook his head.

"Don't drink, eh? Well, I 'll bet then that you are strong on dope," said McKay, as he returned the flask to his pocket.

Night began to turn the color of the hills to a rich cobalt. Now and then the train crawled past shacks whose evening fires were beginning to twinkle in the dusk. Little camps scattered in the niches of the foothills showed gray and blurred. Jagged masses of rock, broken by

cuts and hollows, now overshadowed the train. Giant cacti, growing at impossible angles from pinnacles and crevasses, loomed against the sky line. As the hills shut in, the roar of the train echoed of a sudden louder and louder where the desert runs flat as a board to the hills, and then with no transition becomes the hills.

"Only fifteen miles more now, boys," sang out McKay; "but it may take two hours," he added under his breath.

Cheered by this announcement, one of the Mexicans groped under his seat and produced a large nondescript bundle, which, after sundry cuttings of string, and unwrapping of paper, resolved itself into a guitar. Then, after fishing in his pockets, he produced a mouth-organ with two clamps attached. Loring, for want of better occupation, watched him. The man deftly fastened the harmonica to the edge of the guitar. Then slinging the dirty red guitar ribbon over his neck, he played a few warning chords. When the attention of all was fixed upon him, he bent his head over the mouth-organ, and strumming the guitar accompaniment with sweeping strokes, rendered a selection that had once been "A Georgia Camp-

Meeting." The applause being generous, the artist threw himself into the spirit of his performance.

"Thees time — with variations," he exclaimed excitedly. And they were variations!

McKay regarded his flock with genial interest.

"Ain't he the musical boy, though?" he observed to Loring.

"Playing those two together is quite a trick," thought Loring; "I must learn it." Then he realized that he could not even play either singly. Such impulses and awakenings were frequent with him. Constructively he felt himself capable of doing almost anything. The ridiculousness of his thought aroused him from his lethargy, and he began to hum softly the tune that car wheels always play.

At eight o'clock the engine gave a last exhausted wheeze, and stopped. "Quentin. All ashore!" called out McKay.

The men took their bundles from the racks, crowded down the aisle, and out to the rickety station platform, where the ticket agent, lantern in hand, looked at them wonderingly.

"I did n't lose a man on the trip," McKay said to the agent, in answer to the latter's query

of "What in *hell?*" "Well, boys," went on McKay, "it is ten miles to where we camp, and there ain't no hearses, so I guess we 'll have a nice little moonlight stroll."

The station settlement of Quentin consisted of a few scattered tents, and of five saloons, with badly spelled signs. One shack bore in large letters the proud legend: "Grocery Store." It had evidently been adopted as a residence, for in smaller letters beneath the sign was painted: "This ain't no store — Keep out!" Loring, with lazy amusement, read this evidence of a shiftlessness greater than his own.

The crowd began to gravitate toward the saloons. "Hey, other way there!" shouted McKay, for he well knew that if the crowd began drinking there, very few would reach camp. A big Mexican, who had been imbibing heavily on the train, lurched toward the saloons, bellowing: "Me much *mal' hombre.* I take a drink when I damn please!"

"You much *mal' hombre,* eh?" said McKay, smiling. "Then take that!" He stepped up to the man, and let drive a blow from one shoulder that almost broke the mutineer's jaw. The man staggered, then turned and ran, but up the trail.

The other men howled with laughter, then they picked up their blanket rolls and bundles, and laughing and singing started up the trail, where the deep shadows of the tall suwaras made black streaks against the white porphyry of the projecting cliffs.

Loring and Hop Wah followed at the end of the procession, the former consoling himself for his lack of blankets by thinking how much easier walking was without them; the latter cheerfully singing a song of which verse, chorus, and *envoi* were: "La la boom boom! La la boom boom!" If this were lacking in originality, it was at least capable of infinite repetition, and it turned out to be Wah's one musical number.

Mile after mile up the trail toiled the straggling line, the Mexicans calling loudly to each other, or mocking with jeering whoops the unfortunates who slipped on the loose stones. McKay, chuckling to himself with pleasure, led the little band. He was thinking of the expressions of praise and surprise, of the congratulations upon the successful outcome of his expedition, which would be bestowed upon him in camp.

Immediately ahead of Loring walked the

three other white men of the collection. The volubility of their cursing, as they stumbled along, caused McKay to drop back to them. After the customary greeting of "Well, gents, how are you stacking up?" he began to probe into the cause of their discontent.

"What's the work, boss, anyhow?" they asked.

"Can you 'polish' the head of a drill?" asked McKay. He inquired as a matter of form, for one glance at their slouching shoulders and their thin chests had given him his answer. "Can't?" he observed cheerfully. "Well, I guess your work will be 'mucking' on a narrow gauge railway grade that we are building."

"Mucking!" growled one. "Ain't there nothing else that we can do besides scratch around with a pick and shovel?"

"Well, Sullivan, it is that at first. Later, if I can get you a job out at the main camp, I will. It is sort of hard on you fellows to have to grub with all these 'Mex' at the road camp; but as soon as you get a little 'time' saved up you can start in buying your own stuff and messing together."

"Save up 'time'!" exclaimed Sullivan.

"Hell! There ain't no use savin' anything in this Gawd-forsaken country."

"Well, cheer up, anyway!" laughed McKay. "Here is the ground where the road camp lies." Several camp-fires blazed suddenly out of the darkness. Around them many shadowy figures were grouped. These gathered with interest about the newcomers, noisily commenting upon their appearance. "Here we are, boys. The tents ain't down here yet; but sleeping out of doors is powerful healthy. Sure Mike!" he added, poking a grinning Mexican boy in the ribs. "*Seguro Miguel!* Nothing like it, is there, Pedro?"

"How about the rattle-bugs, Boss?" asked Sullivan, the malcontent.

"There ain't no rattlesnakes out in April. Besides, if there was, they would not bite your carcass," answered McKay, irritated by the man's attitude of continual grumbling.

The men all busied themselves unrolling their blankets and looking for sheltered places in which to sleep. Loring was not accustomed to construction camps. He thought that for the white men, at least, sleeping accommodations must have been provided.

"Where can I sleep?" he asked McKay.

The latter grinned from one big ear to the other. "Say," he drawled, "that's good! Your hot bath ain't ready though. Have n't got any blankets, have you?" he added, relenting a bit. "Better crawl in with some one to-night. To-morrow, when I come down here from the copper camp, I 'll bring you a pair. I guess you won't skip till you have done enough work to pay for them, as you won't have money enough to vamos. And, say, I 've got a swell hat that I will give you. It ain't respectable or refined like not to have one."

The rough kindness touched Loring deeply, and he began to thank him warmly.

McKay uttered a brisk good night and turned to walk up the trail which led to the main camp, two miles beyond. The Mexican whom the boss had knocked down at the station stepped suddenly forward. Expecting trouble, Loring jumped to his feet. He heard McKay say: "I guess the señorita won't think much of your beauty now, will she, Manuel? I 'll send the doctor down in the morning to fix up that face of yours." The Mexican, instead of rushing at McKay, exclaimed excitedly: "Oh, boss, you just like a father to me!"

Still smiling at the sudden change of temper Loring lay down on the ground, and tried to sleep. The knife-like cold of the Arizona night made him shiver. Striving to keep warm, he rolled from side to side. Suddenly, from out of the darkness near him, he heard a soft laugh: "Hey, me bludder, Hop Wah got plenty blankets. Roll here!" Gratefully he crawled in between the Chinaman's blankets. Wah looked at him curiously. "La la boom boom," he crooned to himself. "Heap lot whisky." Then he turned over and went peacefully to sleep.

Loring lay rigidly upon his back. Conscience, remorse, and a rock beneath his fourth rib, all kept him awake. The stars did not answer his half-framed questions, so he shut his eyes. It is hard to think when the eyes are closed, so he opened them again. It was a very simple question that he reiterated to the shadows, to the embers of the fire, and to the drone of the Gila river. It consisted of one word —"Why?" There was no need of his asking any one except himself; but he put off as long as possible asking the one person who could answer, for he KNEW why. His friends had always been so ready to make excuses for his shortcomings, that in

graciousness he could do no less than acquiesce. But in spite of the veil with which memory surrounds facts, when a man lies awake at night he is likely to see them as they are.

That both of Stephen's parents had died when he was a child was no answer to the question which he asked of the fire and the river. His uncle had educated him with an affectionate insight which no parent could have bettered. That he had not all along realized what he was doing was no answer. A keen judge of men, Loring was an inspired critic of himself. It was not lack of ambition that had dragged him down, for always there had been a longing for those things which were not within his grasp. There was no inherent vice in his character. There was courage, loyalty, and kindness. There was only one thing lacking—some power to drive the whole.

Most people are either led or pushed through life. But there are some whose motive power must come from within.

CHAPTER II

AT half-past six the next morning the whistle in the upper camp blew long and clear. It is a strange fact that the dispassionate whistle in the morning is the brutal enemy of labor, calling its victims to the struggle; but that at noon it is impartial and cheerful. It then attempts the roll of referee in the great game between labor and capital and, like a good umpire, favors neither. Yet the same whistle at night, when it calls the game off, becomes the warm ally of the workman, encouraging him openly with promise of rest and supper. It is then as if it said to him: "I was compelled to be impartial. That is my duty; but frankly, now that it is over, I am glad that you have won."

Loring opened his eyes as he heard the morning whistle, and, at first a little dazed, looked about him. Then he rose and stretched himself. Every bone in his body ached as the result of the night on the hard ground. All around him

men were yawning sleepily as they crawled out of their blankets. Close beside the camp ran the tawny Gila river. Stephen walked down to the bank, and kneeling on a small rock which lay half afloat in the ooze mud, endeavored to wash. Then, refreshed, if not much cleaner, he made his way to the cook tent. Here under a fly stretched on poles were four long tables, heaped with tin plates and condensed milk cans. The monotony of the table furnishings was broken by a few dingy cans, decorated with labels of very red tomatoes, which served as sugar and salt holders. The old inhabitants of the camp were noisily greeting the newcomers, pounding on their cups and whistling whenever they perceived some old acquaintance.

The labor of the Southwest is of a very vagrant quality. A man merely works until he has money enough to move. Each time that he moves he spends all his money on a celebration, so that his wanderings, though frequent, are not long in duration. Thus many of these men had met before, around the smelters in Globe, in the Tucson district, or north in the Yavapai.

Loring found a place on one of the rickety benches, and looked toward the coffee-bucket.

Sullivan, who was opposite to him, growled gloomily: "Say, the grub is rank. This coffee is festered water." The description, though not an appetizing one with which to begin a meal, was not without truth. In varying degree it might have been applied to the rest of the breakfast, from the red, tasteless frijollas to the stew, which consisted of a few shreds of over-cooked meat, in the midst of a nondescript mass of questionable grease.

As Loring had finished eating what he could of the meal, and was contemplating borrowing some tobacco, the foremen, who, as etiquette demands, had eaten their breakfast in a group apart from the men, began to look at their watches, and to stir about actively.

"Hurry up now, boys! Out on the grade — quick! *Vamos!* Only five minutes more now!" they called.

The tools of the old workmen were scattered along the grade, where each had dropped them at the end of the previous day's work. The newcomers were marched single file, through the tool-house, where each picked out his implements, then started off to the place assigned him. Loring, not from altruism, but because

he did not know the difference which well chosen tools make in a long day's toil, made no effort to grab. In consequence he emerged from the shed supplied with a split shovel, and a dull, loose-headed pick. A foreman beckoned him to a place on the grade, opposite to the cook tent. He immediately started to swing his pick.

"Don't be in such a hell of a hurry!" called Sullivan, "you 'll have plenty to do later."

The seven o'clock whistle blew sharply. "Lope her, boys!" sang out the section foreman. All talking stopped abruptly, and the click of picks, swung with steady blows, and the rasp of shovels echoed all along the grade. Loring, new to "mucking," swung his pick with all the strength of his back, bringing it down, with rigid full arm strokes, upon the rocky soil. The foreman noticed this with amusement. "He 'll bust in an hour," he thought; but he only said: "Loosen your grip a bit or you 'll get stone-bruises." Then he passed on up the line, to tell a Mexican, who had already stopped to light a cigarette, that "this ain't no rest cure."

Hop Wah from the depths of the cook tent perceived Loring's energetic labors, and called

out to him: "Hey, me bludder, no swing like that! No damnee use. Just let him pick fall!" Stephen nodded gratefully, and complied with the practical advice. He worked steadily, only pausing to exchange his pick for a shovel, whenever he had broken enough earth, or loosened some large stone. "Surely," he thought, "I can keep this up for ten hours. Here, at last, is a job that I can do."

Stephen Loring had never in his life "made good." He had started well on many ventures, and then given out. His friends had at first been intensely admiring, and had predicted great things for him; but gradually they had given him up as hopeless. They would have lent him money cheerfully; but a determination not to borrow was one of his few virtues. In consequence, having fallen stage by stage, he was now reduced to being a day laborer, a "mucker," watched by a foreman to see that he did not shirk. If the same method had been applied to him earlier, it might have been his salvation. As it was, he had sunk beneath the current.

The next hour seemed to Loring twice as long as the first. His wrist pulsed with agony

from the jar of the blows. He was compelled to wrap his handkerchief around his right hand, as he had worn great blisters sliding it up and down the pick handle. The sweat, as it rolled down from his forehead, made his cheeks smart. Every few minutes he was forced to rest. At ten o'clock the time-keeper came to him, and, drawing a shabby brown book from his pocket, entered Stephen's name on the rolls. Then he drew from his pocket and handed to Loring a brass tag, like a baggage check. "Your number is four fifty-three; keep this now!"

Stephen looked at the tag for a second, then slipped it into his pocket. It did not jangle against anything. He leaned on his pick handle for a moment, and with mild interest listened to the time-keeper, as he accosted the Mexican who was working next to him.

"Eh, *hombre!* What's your name? *Cómo se llama?*"

The foreman spoke sharply to Stephen, and with the blood rising slightly to his temples at the rebuke, he fell to work again.

Loring possessed a strong imagination and he had solaced many a hardship by either plan-

ning for pleasanter occupations in the future, or vividly reconstructing worse ones in the past. But imagination is a dangerous plaything. The men working on either side of him thought of nothing, except perhaps some solution of the great problem of the human race, how to make the greatest possible show of work with the least effort. Stephen, however, was accompanied in his work by imagination. To-day it was of a sort which was neither subtle nor pleasant. It began by saying to him: "You are healthy. You will probably live for thirty years or more. They will be pleasant years, won't they? There are three hundred and sixty-five days in a year, so if you work ten hours a day for thirty years, perhaps you may grow used to work. Work is a great companion, is it not, Stephen? It is unfortunate," finished imagination glibly, "that you must do this forever."

Loring spoke aloud in answer to his imagination, timing his syllables to the already shortened strokes of his pick. "Not forever?"

"Well," rejoined imagination, "I see no alternative, do you? And what is more," added the Devil who at this moment was operating imagination, "*You* are not even building the

railroad. All *you* are doing is moving rocks. *Any one* can move rocks."

By noon time Stephen was limp and exhausted. The hour's respite seemed to him to go by like a flash, and he started upon the afternoon's work in a hopeless frame of mind, his muscles stiffened instead of rested by the short relaxation.

After an hour's labor, he moved to a place where the ground was soft, and for a while his delight in this supported him. It is little things such as this which make the epochs in a day of manual labor. As he toiled on grimly, in a few short hours, he had reversed his views on Socialism.

"Of course the laborer is the chief factor in production," he murmured wearily to himself, as he grew more and more dizzy.

At three o'clock, McKay, with a surveying party, reached the section of the grade where Loring was working. Stephen watched him, as he stooped over the level and waved his hand up and down. He heard him shout "O. K. back sight! Ready fore sight!" Then "O. K. fore sight! *'Sta 'ueno!*" and somehow the cheery tones braced Loring for his work.

McKay, as he came up, nodded cheerfully: "I left that hat for you in the cook tent," he said; "it will make you look like a real man!" Then noticing the agonized swings of the pick, he looked at Loring quizzically.

"Say, I reckon you ain't done this sort of thing for some time, have you? I guess a short spell at flagging would n't discourage you. Go up to the tool-house, and get a white flag that you 'll find there. Then go up to that point back there, where the wagon road crosses the grade. I 'll put another flagman on the point below, and when he waves, you stop anything that comes along. In a few minutes we are going to "shoot" all along here, and I don't want to blow up any teams or people that are going up to the copper camp."

Loring dropped his pick with alacrity, and started for the tool-shed. As he walked back along the grade, he looked with curious interest at the men who were still working. Somehow their labors seemed a part of himself. His back ached sympathetically as they stooped to their work. At the shed he found the dirty white rag and stick which served for flagging.

Then he hurried to his place. He passed Sullivan, who waved joyously to him.

"The boss has set me flagging, too. Gee, what a graft! Me for a nap, as soon as they start to shoot. There won't any teams go by, when they hear the shots, and I can get a good sleep."

"You had better not," answered Loring. Then, feeling that it was none of his business, he went on to the place which McKay had assigned to him. He seated himself on a large rock, from which he could see far in all directions. He was at the end of the grade nearest to the copper camp, and he could see the great iron chimneys of the smelter, protruding above the hills to the north, belching forth black smoke against the brilliant blue of the sky. "The whole country looks as if it had been made with a hack-saw," he mused, as he looked at the jagged rocks and irregular mountains about him. "I would give a great deal to see something green besides this accursed cactus; but I suppose that grass and civilization go together."

Then, watching for a signal, he fixed his eyes on the point of rock where Sullivan was stationed. After a few minutes he saw, against

the brown background of the rocks, a spot of white move quickly up and down. He immediately ran out into the road, and stopped a line of coke teams that was coming down from the camp. The drivers merely threw on their brakes, and let the thin-boned, almost transparent horses tug uselessly at the traces, until they discovered the vainness of the effort. Then horses, like drivers, relapsed into the comatose acceptance of conditions, which in the land of the cactus becomes part of man and beast. McKay came up on horseback, calling out to the first of the drivers: "Hold your horses! The e-l-ephants are about to pass!" The Mexican, just as though he had understood, grinned, then again dozed off.

One by one, far down the grade, little puffs of smoke began to curl at the places where the drillers' gangs had been working. The men, howling in mock terror, came tearing past the place where Loring and McKay were standing. They would run several hundred yards further than safety required in order to delay by a few moments their return to work when the blasting was finished. As the men surged by, McKay, in spite of his disgust, grinned.

"Trust a Mex to find some way to shorten work," he said to Loring. In rapid succession the "shots" began to go off; whole sections of the cliffs seemed to swell, then gave forth a fat volume of smoke, and finally burst, hurling fragments of brown-black rock against the sky line. Then, a fraction of an instant later, the dull, muffled boom carried to the ear.

"Regular bombardment, ain't it!" exclaimed McKay. "Wo-op! duck!" As a large jagged piece of shale came whizzing over their heads he and Loring simultaneously dropped to the ground.

"Ain't it funny?" said McKay, as they got to their feet again. "Now time and again these things won't go fifty feet, then all of a sudden they chase a fellow who is a quarter of a mile away."

The heaviest "shot" of all was to be fired in a place near Loring's position, where a deep spur of black diorite protruded across the grade. During five days gangs had been drilling on this spur, so that its face was honeycombed with ten deep holes, for diorite is almost as hard as iron, and to make any impression upon it requires an immense load of powder. McKay

himself had superintended the loading, patting the charges firmly down with the tamping rod, until, as he expressed it, he had enough powder there to "blow hell up to heaven." They had waited to fire these "shots" until the last of the others had exploded, and now the little group of men who were nearest began to look everywhere for shelter. The waiting teams were backed up close against the ledge, while the drivers crawled underneath the wagons for protection. Loring and McKay stood beside a large boulder, behind which they could drop when the explosion came. Into every niche men crawled, waiting for the shock.

The foreman bent over the first fuse, and a wisp of thin blue smoke arose at the touch of his hand.

"Hope he ain't cut the fuses too long," growled McKay anxiously. "If one of those loads misses fire, it won't be safe to work in this neighborhood." The foreman stepped quickly from fuse to fuse, and spurt after spurt of smoke began to curl from the rock, some hanging low, some rising. The foreman stooped over one of the fuses for a second time.

"It 's missed!" exclaimed McKay. "No,

he 's got it. Hey, *beat* it! Quick!" he shouted, as the thin smoke began to turn from whitish-blue to yellow-brown. The foreman ran back up the grade towards them.

"The damned fool!" breathed McKay. "Like as not he 'll kill himself, and it will take me a week to find another man who can shoot the way he can. About thirty seconds more, and that rock is going to jump!"

Loring raised his eyes. Far down the grade, beyond the point, he saw a speck. The speck grew larger and became a horse and rider.

McKay saw it too. "Sullivan will warn him," he said tersely. "My God!" he yelled, "it 's a woman, and her pony is running away."

Loring made a jump into the grade and dashed towards the smoke. The yellow-brown turned to the black-brown that just precedes an explosion. It poured forth from the ground like a volcano.

"He can't even reach the 'shots,'" gasped McKay. "Oh, my God, where was the other flagman! Only fifty yards more — He must make it! — He will! — He 's reached the spot; he 's past it. He will — God, and there 's ten shots there!" Even as he spoke the surface

of the earth belched forth rumbling thunder and burst into fragments. McKay dropped flat on the ground, behind the sheltering boulder. A great cloak of brown smoke punctured with huge black rocks shut out the scene. Then, with dull, splashing thuds, the rocks began to fall into the muddy river which dragged itself along beside the grade. First came a few solemn splashes as the large rocks fell, then faster, a very hailstorm of fragments, as the smaller pieces showered down. The Mexicans were cursing frantically, adding to the roar a shrill pitch.

The first three "shots" went off in lightning succession. A pause, then two more.

"Five!" yelled McKay.

Then three more "shots" boomed deeply. McKay and the foreman knelt behind the boulder, pale, breathing hard, striving to guess what lay behind that wall of smoke. Another pause, then a terrific report.

"Nine, only one more!" shouted the foreman. They waited ten seconds, — no other shot. Then ten seconds more. They rose to their feet and started forward. "Two must have gone off at once," yelled McKay. An-

other roar, and they had barely time to reach cover before the shower of rocks again fell.

"*Ten!* Come on!" roared McKay. The rocks had hardly fallen, before he, followed by a dozen others, was rushing through the smoke to what he knew must be beyond. The grade was blocked with great masses of rock, and by the time they had climbed over these barriers, the smoke had cleared.

They found Loring lying on his face, his right hand still grasping the bridle of the dead horse. The girl was kneeling beside him. As McKay reached her side, he recognized the daughter of the manager of the mine. He raised her to her feet, while as if dazed by the miracle he repeated: "You ain't hurt, Miss Cameron? You ain't hurt?" She shook herself free from him, then knelt again by Stephen, trying to stanch with her handkerchief the blood that was flowing from a great cut in his temple. She looked up at McKay with an anxious appeal in her eyes. "Is he dead?" she asked.

McKay bent over, and opening the rough shirt felt Loring's heart. "No, he 's alive still, but he 's pretty close to gone," he answered. He untwisted the tight clenched fingers from the bridle, and half

"The girl was kneeling beside him." *Page 36*

raised the unconscious body. It lay limp in his arms. He turned to one of the foremen who were gathered around.

"Smith, get a horse and ride like hell for the company doctor!" The man was off for the corral in an instant.

"Now, Miss, you just leave him to us!" went on McKay. "See now, your skirt is getting all blood."

For reply, she raised Loring's head gently and placed it in her lap. "Now, send some one for blankets and water," she directed.

"*Agua*, hey, *ag-ua!*" shouted McKay, and in a minute a little pale-faced water boy came stumbling up with a bucket of muddy water. McKay looked on in wonder while the girl deftly washed the dirt from the wounds.

"She has her nerve," he thought. "There ain't nothing like a woman."

One of the Mexicans came back from the cook tent with a blanket, and upon this they gently lifted Stephen. Then four men carried him to the nearest tent. Jean walked beside them, holding her wet handkerchief tightly against Loring's forehead, in vain attempt to stop the bleeding. They laid him on the ground, inside the tent.

"Now you must go, Miss Cameron," implored

McKay. "I 'll send you up to camp in one of the teams. Your father would never forgive me if I let you stay. Why you are as pale as —"

The girl interrupted him decisively. "Are there any cloths here for bandages?"

He looked hopelessly around the tent with its pile of dirty quilts.

"I don't see anything," he murmured.

Jean seized the soft white stock about her neck, and with a quick tug tore it off. "This will do," she breathed, as she placed the impromptu bandage about Loring's head.

"Now tie this! I can't pull it tightly enough."

McKay drew the ends of the bandage together, and clumsily knotted them. Then he thought of his one universal remedy. Meekly turning to Jean he asked: "How about some whisky for him?" She nodded, and he drew a flask from his pocket. With strong fingers he pried open Stephen's jaws, and poured the whisky down his throat. The stimulant brought a slight color to the mask-like face.

"I guess he would sure enjoy this some, if he were conscious," thought McKay grimly. The men had been sent back to work, and only he and Miss Cameron knelt in the tent by Stephen, feel-

ing anxiously for the slow heart-beats in the big helpless frame. Then came the pound of horses' hoofs on the road, the sliding sound of a pony flung back in full career upon his haunches, and the doctor stood pulling open the flaps of the tent. Jean rose to her feet.

"I shall only be in the way now," she said, and stepped outside into the vivid sunlight.

CHAPTER III

TWO weeks had passed since the accident. Loring, whose life had been at first despaired of, was gaining fast in strength, and enjoying the first real comfort that he had known in months. As he lay quietly on the hard canvas cot, the rough company hospital seemed to him a dream of luxury.

His cot had been placed close to the door, where he could look out over the little camp. The early morning light brought the whiteness of the tents scattered about the plateau into clear contrast with the shadowy brownness of the surrounding mountains, while in the sunlight the yellow pine framework of the intermingled shacks sparkled brightly. The smelter pounded away steadily, great wreaths of smoke pouring from its chimneys, the blast sucking and breathing like some huge driven beast. Intermingled with the sound was the clanging rasp of shovels, as the smelter stokers piled coke into the furnace. Over on the far mountain a wood-laden burro train

was picking its way slowly down the trail. In the thin morning air the tinkle of the bells on the animals' necks and the sharp calls of the drivers carried clear across the valley. Close by the smelter, in the midst of the coal dust and cinders, stood a jaded horse, with a harness made of chains. For two days it had fascinated Loring to see the deft way in which the driver hooked this horse to the glowing slag pots, and drove him along the narrow track that led out on the slag dump. With the childishness of the sick, he harbored a deep grudge against the shack, behind which the horse, with his molten load, would always disappear. This prevented his seeing the operation of dumping the slag, which he felt must be highly interesting. At the other side of the doorway he could just see the corner of a newly finished shack. He looked a bit gloomily at the completed building, for it had been delightful to watch the carpenters at work upon it. In two days the whole house had been finished, even to the tin roofing. This tin roofing, by the way, had brought Stephen much joy, for the carpenter's assistant had laid the plates from top down, instead of beginning at the bottom, so that the joints would overlap and be water-

tight. In consequence the whole roofing had been ripped off and done over again.

The morning shift was just going to work, and the hurrying groups of men passed the door on their way up to the mine. At the watering-trough each stopped, and plunging his canteen deep into the water, held it there until the burlap and flannel casing was saturated, ensuring a cooling drink for them during their work. Loring laughed at himself when he found himself wishing that they would not all wear blue denim overalls.

Little water boys struggled past, each with a pole, like a yoke across his shoulders, from either end of which hung a bucket. The men greeted them as they passed, with calls of "Go-od boy!" "*Bueno muchacho!*" Several of the men, as they passed, greeted Stephen with shy exclamations of "*Eh, amigo — Cóm' estamos?*" Then they went on to their work beneath the ground. Loring was touched by these inquiries for his welfare, and smiled in a friendly fashion at each.

Loring's smile had been one of his worst enemies, for it had so often prevented people from telling him what they thought of him. It combined a sensitiveness which was unexplained

by the rather heavy molding of his chin, with a humor which only one who had carefully studied his eyes would be prepared for. It was an exasperating smile to those who did not like him, for it possessed a quality of goodness and strength to which they thought he had no right as an accompaniment to his character. On the other hand, it was one of the attributes which most strongly attracted his friends. It was not an analytical smile, so it put him in touch with unanalytical people, yet it had a certain deprecating twist which could convey a hint of subtlety.

When the seven o'clock whistle blew, Loring thought of the gang at the road camp lined up for ten hours of relentless toil, and he breathed deep in contentment.

"It is great to be laid up for a respectable cause," he thought. Memories of the times that he had spent at an old university in the East came to him. He looked about him at the rough, bare boards, at the eight canvas cots, at the lumps on three of them, where, wearing the inevitable pink or sky blue undershirt, lay sick Mexican miners. He amused himself by mentally filling with his old-time associates each of the empty cots. "I wish they were all here," he half ex-

claimed. Then it occurred to him that this was not a very kindly wish. Loring heard the murmur of voices outside the door, and listened attentively. He recognized the voice of the company doctor. "It must be time for the morning clinic," he thought to himself. Then he listened to the brisk questioning and prescribing.

"You feeling much *mal'?* Well, not so much whisky next time; get to work!"

Stephen heard a low-voiced question from some one. Then again the doctor's decided answer: "Of course not! Hospital fee does not pay for crutches. What do you want for a dollar, anyhow?"

He listened with interest as each man described his symptoms or his needs. "It makes me feel almost well to hear about all those things," he reflected. The broad shoulders and cheerful smile of the doctor appeared in the doorway, and with heavy footsteps the owner of these two pleasant possessions approached Loring.

"Feeling pretty good this morning?" asked the doctor.

Stephen answered that he was.

"That's fine," exclaimed the doctor. "At one time you were a pretty tough case. I thought

we'd have the trouble of a funeral in camp. Swell affairs they are, here. But say, did you ever see a funeral in Phœnix? Why, they *trots* 'em in Phœnix!"

Loring expressed his admiration for such a spirit of activity, while the doctor was propping him up in bed, and adjusting the bandages.

"I guess you won't have to work for some days," remarked the doctor. "It is lucky you did one day's work, as it just pays for your hospital fee and medicine."

"Hard luck, doctor," laughed Stephen, "but that had to go for traveling expenses." Hearing light footsteps on the porch outside, the doctor went to the door. Loring heard him answer some question.

"Well, Miss Cameron, I guess it won't kill him to see you. It may even be good for him. Come in by all means!"

Loring looked up and saw framed in the doorway, like a picture, a girl frank of eyes and fresh of coloring. A little Scotch cap was perched on the waves of her tawny hair. Her gown was of dark blue, relieved at neck and throat by bands of white, and girdled by a ribbon of red and blue plaid. Across her arms lay a sheaf of yellow and

red wild flowers such as creep into abundant life among the forbidding rocks. The vision seemed to bring a new tide of life and vigor to Loring. He forgot his weakness and raised himself for a moment on his elbow; but the effort was too much for him, and he sank back exhausted on his pillow.

The girl hesitated for an instant. Then she stepped quickly over to his cot.

"This is Miss Cameron, Loring," explained the doctor; "she has come to thank you for what you have done."

The girl impulsively bent over him, and took his big, weak hand in her own small, strong one.

"Oh, I am glad that you are better. I would have come before to see you, but the doctor would not allow it."

Loring looked malevolently at the doctor.

"How can I thank you?" she went on.

So fascinated was Stephen by the eager breathless way in which she spoke, that he hardly understood what she was saying. With difficulty he raised himself again on his elbow. "Why it was all in the day's work of a flagman," he said. "There is nothing at all for which to thank me."

She shook her head in denial. "It is not in the

day's work of a flagman to risk his life for someone whom he has never seen," she said quickly. "There is nothing that I can say which can possibly express my gratitude; but you do know, don't you?" As she spoke she looked at him appealingly.

Stephen murmured something, he scarcely knew what, in reply, and was conscious of wishing vaguely that the doctor would not look at him.

Miss Cameron laid her armful of flowers beside him. As she dropped the red and yellow sheaf, Stephen noticed the delicate modeling of her wrist, and smiled appreciatively. "When you are better, my father will see you," continued the girl. "He will reward you, and —" With her usual quick intuition she noticed the shade of annoyance on his face. "That is," she went on rather slowly, "he will do what he can for you."

"Thank you," said Loring, "but I think that in two or three weeks I shall be able to work again."

"I am afraid if I let you talk any more, you won't ever be able to work," interrupted the doctor.

"I will come again to-morrow," said Jean. "If there is anything that you want, you must

let us send it to you. Good-bye, and thank you!" Her voice as she spoke had the quality of sympathy.

He watched her for a moment as she stopped by the other cots, inquiring in pretty broken Spanish for the welfare of the occupants. "Hang it," he thought, "I wish she would not look at that Mexican in just the way that she looked at me!" With his eyes he followed her as long as he could, then when the tents shut her from view, he closed his eyes and imagined that she was still near.

He picked up the flowers and buried his face in them. Their sweetness brought up a wave of memories of the past, of things that he had thrown away. He bit his lip hard and under his breath swore bitterly at himself. Then the fragrance of the flowers soothed him, and he lay back on his pillow thinking of the girl who had brought them. She seemed so strange a figure in the life of Quentin, so aloof, so unrelated! He could not adjust her to her setting. At last it occurred to him that it was not necessary for him to adjust her — in fact that she and her setting were none of his business.

Then tired, with the flowers still crushed in his hand, he fell asleep to the accompaniment

of the monotonous pound of the smelter. He dreamed of days gone by, yet through it all, vaguely, intangibly, there drifted a girl, the tenderness of whose eyes was blended with the impersonality of pity.

As they walked together across the camp, Miss Cameron remarked to the doctor: "It is strange how the rough life here seems to train men. He seemed to be almost a gentleman."

Doctor Kline smiled in an amused fashion.

"There's a lot here, Miss Cameron, who seem 'almost a gentleman,' and they are not the best kind, either. In fact they come pretty near to being the worst. Arizona is not the graveyard of reputations. It's the hell that comes after that. Men drift here from every corner of the world, and from every sort of life. The undercurrent here is full of derelicts. Nobody questions about the past or the future here. They just drift, and it is not so very long before most of them sink."

In the course of forty years of varied experience, Dr. Kline had never made so long a speech. He stopped short, and, flushing, looked quickly at Miss Cameron to see if she were laughing at him. Her serious expression reassured him, and he

looked at her again; only this time it was for the purpose of admiration.

They had reached the door of her father's house. It was called a house and not a shack, partly as a matter of etiquette, being the manager's dwelling, and partly because it had a porch. Also it possessed the added grandeur of two small wings, which were joined to the one-story, central building.

Jean said good-bye to the doctor and went into the house. Her father was busy at his desk with some large blue prints of the workings; but he stopped when she entered.

"How is the man getting along?" he asked. "I hope that the poor devil is n't laid up so that he can never swing a pick again."

"He is much better," answered Jean, as she dropped into a big chair beside her father's desk, "but, Father, do these men do nothing else all their lives beside swing picks?"

Her father smiled, amused at the earnest manner. "Well, my dear, they are likely to do so, unless they develop aptitude for 'polishing' the head of a drill, as they say here. In other words, become miners, instead of 'muckers,' in which case they get their three dollars a day in-

stead of two. The difference in social position, however, which I suppose is what you mean, is not very great."

"I thought that the West was a place where men rose fast from the ranks, where the opportunities for success lay at each man's feet," said Jean thoughtfully.

"That is partially true," replied her father; "but you must remember steadiness is needed as much here as anywhere, and that is a quality which most men, of a type such as I judge this Loring to be, have not. Also to reach success here they have to swim through a river of whisky, and most of them drown in transit."

Jean sat for a moment in silence, the sun playing tricks of light and shade across the ripples of her hair and in the depths of her level-gazing eyes.

At length she exclaimed suddenly: "Why is it that they all drink?"

"Why?" echoed her father. "I have been so occupied with the result that I have had no time to consider the cause. The fact is — they have no other form of relaxation here. Besides, when men work seven days a week all the year round, after a while they reach a point where they must

do something to break the tedium, and drinking whisky is a convenient method."

"Then why do you make them work on Sunday?" asked Jean. "Why not let them rest on that day?"

Her father laughed. "Well, it does n't sound logical after what I have just said, but if they get Sunday to rest, they are all so drunk that we have not enough men on Monday to start the mines. We tried it once. I suppose that the only explanation of the way the men drink here is that they do. I think it is a germ in the air."

Mr. Cameron turned again to his work. Jean sat silently beside him watching the firm lines with which he traced new winzes, drifts, and cross-cuts on the prints, the precision with which he wrote his comments on the borders.

It was a strong face which bent over the table, strong, stern, and telling of a Scotch ancestry in which Mr. Cameron took great pride, for had not one of his forefathers fought in the army of the Lord of the Isles, and another been a faithful follower to the end of the hopeless Stuart cause!

Clearly loyalty was a tradition of their race, and typical of that allegiance which still made

all Scotch things dear to these two descendants of the old Highlanders, which led the father to hang on the bare walls of his cabin the shield of the Camerons with its armorial bearings of "or, three bars gules," and impelled Jean to wear a Scotch cap, and always, somewhere about her dress, a touch of the red and blue Cameron plaid.

Now, as Jean stood at her father's side, it was easy to see the family likeness, for all the softening of age and sex, which had changed the lines of his face to the curves of hers. The same spirit looked out from both pairs of eyes, and if ever there should come a conflict of wills between the two, there would be as pretty a fight as once happened at Inverlochie, when a Cameron and the Lord Protector fell foul of each other.

Jean Cameron had been only a month in Quentin. She had begged to join her father and he had consented, although he had assured her that she would dislike the life. But from the first she had loved the place and everything about it. The atmosphere of crude labor, the men thrusting down into the mountains and drawing out the green-crusted ore, the rides

across the trails, had brought her a sense of exhilaration.

She had expected to find in the West the romance of freedom, of wildness, of the natural type. Instead, she had found, and it was infinitely more fascinating, the romance of work, of risk borne daily as a matter of course, not from love of danger, but because it meant bread. To a girl of her keen perception there was a meaning in it all. It was the first glimpse that she had ever had of a world where the little things of life had no existence and where the big things were the little things.

CHAPTER IV

DURING his convalescence, Stephen had many callers. Mr. Cameron paid him a short visit, and briskly and efficiently expressed his gratitude. At least this was the way in which Loring characterized it to himself, after his departure. From motives of kindness, most of the foremen and men from the office force came in to see him; from motives of self-interest, the visits were generally repeated, for Loring combined a drollness, a vein of narrative, and a wide range of experiences.

McKay was one of those who dropped in frequently to discuss the affairs of the camp in short, jerky sentences, which alternated with the puffs from his stubby black pipe. Stephen, by a great amount of reticence as to his own personal affairs, had won McKay's respect as a wise man. He was by nature of an exuberant temperament; but experience had taught him that taciturnity was the best way to acquire a reputation for solidity in a community. About four years pre-

vious to this time, when he had embarked in life in the West, the first man under whom he had worked had commented upon his garrulous propensities rather caustically. His words: "You don't want to talk too much in this world, young feller; it ain't pleasant," had been borne in upon Loring to the great improvement of his character. McKay had once in the course of a discussion of different men's capabilities expressed the Western view very tersely. He had said: "The wisest man I ever knew was a fellow in Nogales. I never heard him open his mouth once!"

Loring's visitors, however, were not all of such a character. Every morning Miss Cameron came into the hospital and greeted Stephen with a gay smile that made pain seem a base currency with which to pay for such happiness. He had come to look forward to the few minutes during which she talked to him as the oasis of his day. As time went on, his thoughts of her grew more absorbing. A man when convalescent can, with the greatest of ease, fall in love with an abstract ideal, so that when a very charming concrete example was near, the process of dreaming speedily crystallized to a point where Stephen

found himself very much in love. For many hours after one of her visits he lay staring at the ceiling, trying to find some adjective by which to describe her. Failing in his direct search, he fell back on the method of question and answer. Was she beautiful? he asked himself. It was many years since he had seen women of her class, and it was hard for him to find a comparative standard. He was certain that she was a joy to look upon. Had she sympathy? Her kindness to the sick Mexicans in the hospital was a ready answer to that question. Was she feminine? She had a quality of comradeship and companionship combined, which previously he had only associated with men. Yet back of it was a latent coquetry, and unconsciously it piqued him to feel that towards him there was no trace of it. Strive as he would, he could find no word which could fit all the opposing sides of her character, her aloof frankness, her subtle force.

"Fall-in-love-withable-ness," he reflected, "is not a recognized word, and yet it is the one that describes her."

At last came the days when with effort at first, then with ease, he could stroll from shack to shack about the camp. He often spent his

time in the assay office, watching the assayer tend the delicate balances, or precipitate the metal from the various shades of blue liquid which stood on the ledge by the window in neat rows of test-tubes. Then there was the *tienda*, where, sitting on a box in the corner, he could watch the Mexicans as they crowded up to the bookkeeper's window, loudly calling out their numbers, and asking for coupons. The air in the store was always thick with the smell of "*Ricorte*" or "*Pedro*" tobacco. There were also in the glass cases gaudy tinfoil-wrapped cigars, "*Dos Nationes*," which the more lavish and wealthy purchased, and which added a slightly more expensive hue to the smoky atmosphere. Often, too, he would loaf about the draughting-room, where at first he amused himself by drawing exceedingly impressionistic sketches on the bits of paper that were scattered about.

Stephen possessed that rare quality of being able to loaf without being in the way. His loafing added a pleasant background to work that others were doing, instead of being an irritant. Gradually he came to helping Duncan, the surveyor, to check up his figures, and, much to the

latter's surprise, in speedy fashion worked out logarithms for him. Loring as a subordinate always did so well that it made his incompetency, when given responsibility, doubly disappointing. Duncan, whose mathematical methods were, though no doubt safer, far slower, grew to have an excessive opinion of Loring's ability, and expressed it about the camp. He often questioned Stephen as to where he had acquired his knowledge of logarithms; but Loring always told him that he had merely picked it up at a way station on the journey of life. As curiosity about others rarely goes deep in Arizona, the subject had been finally taken for granted, and dropped.

One day while Stephen was working with Duncan, Mr. Cameron entered the room, and said abruptly: "Well, Loring, are you about ready for work?"

"Yes," said Stephen, "I was going to work for Mr. McKay again to-morrow."

Mr. Cameron paused for a moment, and looked him over carefully. He noticed the clear light of the eyes, and he was pleased. He noticed the indecisive lines at the corners of the mouth, hesitated, and almost imperceptibly

shook his head. Years of experience had taught him to read men's faces well. This was the first which he had ever liked, and yet not quite trusted. The combination of feeling puzzled him.

Loring had begun to flush a trifle under the sharp scrutiny, before Mr. Cameron again spoke.

"I was thinking of giving you a position on the hoist. The man on Number Three is going to quit to-morrow." Mr. Cameron said "quit," with a little snap of the jaw, that left no doubt as to why the man was going to leave. "Do you know anything about the work?" he went on.

Loring's "No, but I think perhaps I can learn," seemed to irritate Mr. Cameron, who exclaimed: "Good Lord, man! 'think perhaps you may be able to learn.' 'Think perhaps!' Here you are going to have men's lives in your hands. It is no place for a man who thinks 'perhaps.' Still I will try you. You will receive three dollars and a half for eight hours, and overtime, extra. At that the work is not hard. You can go up to the shaft now. Colson, the man whom you are going to try to replace, is

on shift, and he will teach you what he can. You go on the pay-roll to-morrow." Cutting short Stephen's thanks, Mr. Cameron abruptly left the office.

Duncan began to chuckle quietly.

"It is damned lucky for you, Loring, that you did n't go on much further with your theories of 'thinking perhaps.' I don't know where you were before you came here, and I don't care; but here it will help you some to remember that it is only what you *do* know or *can* do that counts."

Stephen took cheerfully this good advice, and after securing his hat, he stretched himself comfortably in the doorway, then started up the hill to the mine. In the hot glare he climbed the tramway which led from the hungry ore cribs by the smelter to Number Three hoist. He was still weak, and the climb tired him considerably. Several times, in the course of the few hundred yards, he stopped and rested. As many times more he was compelled to step to one side of the track in order to let the funny, squat, little ore cars whiz by him, the brake cable behind them stretching taut, and whining with the peculiar note of metal under tension. When at

last, tired and out of breath, he reached the hoist box, Colson gave him a sour greeting.

"Damned boiler leaks like a sieve. Have to keep stoking her all the time. Engine is always getting centered. Wish you joy! It 's the worst job I ever tackled."

In answer to Loring's request for instructions, Colson slowly wiped his hands on a bit of oily waste, and having taken a fresh chew of tobacco, proceeded to explain the working of the drum hoist, and the signal code.

For the rest of the afternoon, under Colson's supervision, Stephen managed the clutch that governed the cable, and at the ever recurring clang of one bell, ran the ore buckets with great speed up the shaft. Whenever the signal of three bells, followed by one, rang out, he brought the buckets slowly and decorously to the surface, for that told of a human load. Loring, in spite of apparent clumsiness, possessed a great amount of deftness, and he was soon running the hoist fairly well, although the jerks with which the engine was brought to a standstill told the miners that a new and inexperienced hand was at the clutch.

At half-past three the men of the shift began

to signal to come to the surface. Loring asked Colson how, when the shift did not end till four, this was allowed. Colson explained that as the mine was non-Union, and employed mostly Mexican labor, the piece work system was in use. When the men had filled a certain number of buckets, they could come to the surface regardless of the time. The result had been that more work was accomplished than formerly, while the miners had shorter hours.

"That is all very pleasant," reflected Stephen, "if the company, having seen how active the men can be, does not increase the number of buckets required."

Shortly before four o'clock they were relieved by the engineer for the next shift, who undertook the task of lowering the waiting men. Then Colson and Loring, picking up their coats, walked slowly down the hill into the camp. At the smelter Loring parted with Colson and walked over to his own quarters. Since his dismissal from the hospital, he had been sharing a tent with one of the shift bosses, — a man about whom Stephen knew little except the fact that he was named Lynn, and that he never washed. The company rented tents with

board floors, for two dollars a month, so that when the quarters were shared, household expenses were not large.

As Loring threw back the wire-screened door of the tent, Lynn, from within, greeted him with mild interest.

"I hear they are goin' to try you on Number Three. Now over where I used to work in Black Eagle, they would n't let a green man even smell the hoist. It ain't safe, nor legal. But I suppose the Boss had to give you *some* job. All wrong, though."

Loring kept discreet silence in answer to this, and after fetching a bucket of water, proceeded to wash with many splashes. This annoyed Lynn, who grunted: "How can a man do any work with you wallowin' round like a herd of steers?" Then he returned to his previous occupation of poring over location papers for some claims of his "up yonder." These claims were the joke of the camp, on account of their remoteness from any known ore vein, yet Lynn, unaffected by the waves of exultation or depression which from time to time swept through the camp, year by year persisted in doggedly doing his assessment work.

THE UP GRADE

In Arizona almost every man, no matter what his occupation or station, has "some claims up in the hills." These claims furnish the romance of his life, for always beneath the grimmest present lies the golden "perhaps" of a rich strike.

Stephen sat on the edge of his cot, rolling a cigarette and watching Lynn's profile.

"There are some people," he meditated, "who would not look cheerful if they were paid so much a smile." When Lynn had finished his papers, he rose with solemn deliberative slowness, took down a black felt hat from a wooden peg on the tent pole, transferred his toothpick from the left side of his mouth to the right, and slouched towards the door.

"Come on over to grub!" he called back. Loring joined him, and together they walked over to the company mess.

As they picked their way along the sordid road, Stephen looked at the dirty houses of the Mexicans with a feeling of repulsion. They were built from all the refuse that could be gathered: old sheet iron, quilts, suwara rods, a few boards, broken pieces of glass and tarred paper. A broken-down wagon, on one wheel,

lurching in a dissipated fashion against a boulder, added to the disreputability of the tin-can-strewn road. While he and Lynn were plodding moodily along, Stephen suddenly heard behind him the clatter of horses' hoofs. He turned. The scene no longer seemed sordid, for riding up the road was Miss Cameron. Around her rode five or six little girls, — the camp children, — their legs, too short to reach the stirrups, stuck in the leathers, their hair flying in all directions, while their stiff little gingham dresses fluttered in the breeze. Jean, riding a gray pony, sat clean limbed and lithe across the saddle. The deep full modeling of breast and thigh, the proud carriage of the shoulders, and the easy swing of her body to the lope of the horse — all bespoke high health and keen enjoyment. Her khaki skirt fell on either side in yellow folds against the oiled brown of the saddle. She wore no hat, and the sunlight struck clear and sparkling upon her tawny hair. Her color was fresh from the sting of the wind.

Stephen stepped aside to let the little cavalcade pass; but Miss Cameron reined in her pony, and smilingly greeted him and his companion. Her convoy of little girls bade her a grateful

"good-bye," and scattered to their homes in the various parts of the camp.

"You seem to be a 'Pied Piper of Hamelin,'" remarked Stephen, looking up at her. Lynn for some reason appeared uneasy.

"No, I don't decoy them," she answered. "In fact, I try hard to get away from them, but they are not allowed to ride alone in the valley, and consequently whenever they see my pony saddled they swarm about me like bees and cannot be shaken off. Are you sure that you are strong enough to be out of the hospital?" Miss Cameron added, scrutinizing Stephen with friendly solicitude.

Loring was busying himself with the problem of whether her eyes were really gray or blue. He gathered his wits together however to answer that he was growing better steadily.

"Well, good night, and be sure to continue to get better!" The girl shook the reins of her pony, and galloped off towards the corral.

Lynn could no longer contain himself.

"Look a-here, Loring. I don't know where you was brought up, but Miss Cameron is a lady, if ever I seed one, and whar I come from, gentlemen don't call ladies 'Pi-eyed Pipers.'"

Stephen, with a start, came out of his wistful mood, then almost collapsed with laughter. Lynn stalked along in silent wrath, not speaking another word until they entered the mess room.

It was half-past five, and the room was still crowded, though that many had come and gone was attested by the pools of coffee on the zinc tables, the bread crumbs on the floor, and the great piles of dirty dishes. In a mining camp five o'clock is the fashionable supper hour, and he who comes late has cause to rue it. Loring and his companion cleared places for themselves, and after the necessary preliminaries of wiping their cracked plates on their sleeves, and obtaining their share from the great bowl of stew in the center of the table, they proceeded to eat in businesslike silence. There had been a time when such surroundings would have taken away Stephen's appetite, but that was far away. The proprietor walked frequently up and down the room, answering mildly the contumely heaped upon the food. He carried a large bucket from which he replenished the coffee cups. Stephen quickly reached the dessert stage of the meal, and the proprietor set that course before

him. It consisted of two very shiny canned peaches, floating in a dubious juice.

The man who owned the eating house was of a quiet, depressed nature developed by years of endeavor to please boarders' appetites at one dollar a day and make a profit of seventy-five cents. Ordinarily dessert consisted of one canned peach. Loring's double allowance was a silent tribute to the fact that he did not rail at the food as did the others, and to the fact that once, when the purveyor had "spread himself" and served canned oysters, Stephen had thanked him. This had been the third time that the man had been thanked in all his life, and he stowed it away in his strange placid brain.

When Stephen had finished his meal, he rose and joined the group of men, who, as customary after supper, were lounging on the steps. The proprietor, wearing his usual apologetic smile, soon joined them.

"Pretty good supper, boys?" he remarked tentatively.

Some one in the crowd moaned drearily. "Say, I know what good food is. I used to eat up at the Needles, at a place so swell they give Mexicans pie. Reg'lar sort of Harvey house, that

was." The proprietor, still smiling, sadly withdrew, and the crowd returned to its former occupations: commenting on the thin ponies of the Mexicans who galloped by, and trying to catch the eyes of the señoritas as they strolled past, arm in arm, seemingly stolid alike to the attentions and to the jests of the men.

Many of the Indians, who had been brought from the San Carlos Reservation to work on the railway grade, were in camp to make their simple purchases of supplies. Stephen noticed with disgust the way the braves sat astride their ponies with indolent grace, while beside them walked the squaws, with the papooses slung in blankets over their shoulders.

"Good example of the 'noble redman,' is n't it!" he exclaimed to McKay.

"Well, what can you expect?" chuckled the latter. "You know in their marriage ceremony the brave puts the bit of his pony in the mouth of his prospective bride. Sort of a symbol of equality and companionship between man and wife, I reckon."

As the twilight turned to dusk, the group gradually dissolved, till Loring alone was left on the steps. It was peaceful there, and as he

drew on his old black pipe, a healthy feeling of contentment permeated him. He felt that he could do his new work well. His last lessons, he thought, had taught him concentration. He saw himself working up again to a position of power. For some reason that even to himself was only vaguely defined, he felt that now it was all infinitely worth while. As for drink, he merely thought of it as an episode of the past. Stephen's worst fault lay in not grappling with his enemies until they had him by the throat. As he sat smoking and dreaming, he was aroused by a cheerful salutation.

"Howdy, me bludder? Me bludder, he feel fine?"

Stephen looked up to see Hop Wah standing in the road before him. With his derby hat, yellow face, coal black pig-tail, and with a five-cent cigar drooping from one corner of his mouth Wah was a strange combination of Occident and Orient.

"Fine, thanks!" answered Loring, "but what are you doing up here in camp now, Wah?"

Wah proudly puffed at his cigar, and blew a wreath of gray smoke from between his flat lips.

"Me cook for the company here, now. Makee

pie ebbrey day. Oh, lubbly, lubbly pie! Me bludder come to back door, and I give him some. Oh, lubbly, lubbly pie! Goodee bye. Goodee bye, me bludder!" Then Wah departed in the direction of the *tienda*, marching cheerfully along to his old refrain: "La, la, boom, boom; la, la, boom, boom."

"The crazy Chinaman!" laughed Stephen. "He certainly enjoys life, though." Loring rose and knocked out the ashes of his pipe on the steps. Then he walked towards his tent. They were just dumping the slag from the smelter, and he watched the glowing slag pot shoot along the track in front of him. As if by magic it checked at the end of the heap, and poured its molten, flashing stream far over the embankment. The whole camp glowed with a clear, all-suffusing orange light. The outline of the surrounding mountains loomed out blue-black. The glow faded to dull red, then dwindled to a mere thread of light, then disappeared, and all was dark again.

During the next two months, with a concentration of which he had never before thought himself capable, Stephen slaved at learning his task. To feel that in his hands lay the lives of the six-

teen men of the shift gave him a sense of responsibility, which in all his former work had been completely lacking. He was so faithful in the performance of his duties that even the critical Mr. Cameron was secretly pleased, while Jean watched with growing interest her father's experiment, and felt that at last Loring had ceased to drift.

Stephen, on his part, carried in his heart one memory which shortened his working day, gladdened his leisure hours, and left no time for vain regrets. This was the thought of one evening which he had spent at Mr. Cameron's house, on the occasion of a "Gringo" dance, whereto all the workers in camp, except the Mexicans, had been bidden, in celebration of Washington's birthday.

Often did Stephen recall the flag-draped room, the Mexican orchestra, which in color resembled a slice of strawberry, vanilla, and chocolate ice-cream. He remembered the lantern-lighted porch, its lamps blending with the soft darkness of the southern night, hung with its own lanterns of stars.

But all these were only a background of his real memories, which were the warm touch of

Jean's hand, as he had held it in the dance for five blessed minutes, and the sound of her voice as she had talked with him on the porch, in the brief intervals when the guests had gathered around the musicians, to invoke the "Star Spangled Banner" and urge that long might it "Wa-a-ave!"

What they had talked about Stephen scarcely knew; but he had a confused impression that under the commonplaces of their talk had lurked, on her part, a hint of friendship which made his dreams perhaps not quite so wild, for he recognized in her something softly invincible which once having given friendship would never withdraw it, though the skies fell. In fact, while Loring was playing cards over the mess table one evening, Jean was putting her friendship to the proof in another quarter of the camp.

"Father, he is a gentleman." Jean made this remark after a period of silence, during which she had sat on the porch of the shack, contemplating the moon as it rode high in the unclouded sky.

"Who is a gentleman? The man in the moon?" As he asked the question, Mr. Cameron withdrew

his cigar from his mouth, and puffed the smoke in leisurely rings into the air.

"No," Jean answered, "not the man in the moon; the man on the hoist, Stephen Loring."

"What made you think of him?"

"I met him this afternoon in the valley. That put him into my head."

"Well, I advise you to take him out again."

"Not at all. I shall keep him there. He interests me, because he is a gentleman."

"What are the hall-marks of a gentleman?"

"Oh," said Jean slowly, "there are a hundred little signs which cannot be suppressed. A deacon may turn into a horse thief, or a millionaire into a beggar; but once a gentleman, always a gentleman. Mr. Loring tries to hide it; but he cannot. Oh, haven't you noticed the difference?"

"Between Loring and the other men? No, I cannot say that I have. But I am not particularly interested in the question whether my hoist engineers are gentlemen."

"Don't you think you ought to be?"

"Why?"

Jean clasped her hands around her knee and looked out over the dim hills bathed in the mist

of the moonlight. After a while she said: "It must be very lonely for a gentleman in a camp like this."

"If you are thinking of Loring," said her father, "he is busy all day and he can go to the mess in the evening."

"The mess!" exclaimed Jean scornfully. "Yes, a fine place for a gentleman, where the men chew tobacco and drink whisky all the evening, and tell stories as long as they are broad!"

"All terribly offensive no doubt to a sensitive soul like your Mr. Loring," answered Mr. Cameron. "Perhaps," he added with fine sarcasm, "you would like to have him take his meals with us."

"Yes, I would like to ask him here sometime. It is good in you to think of it," replied his daughter calmly.

"It cannot be done, Jean. It cannot be done," Mr. Cameron said with decision. "Discrimination among the men breeds discontent. I think that we have done full enough for Loring as it is."

"Do you?" Jean responded, with the audacity of a hot temper. "Well, I do not; but then it was my life that he saved, and perhaps that makes me see the thing differently. I am thinking that

when a man saves your life you cannot get rid of the obligation by throwing him a job, as you might toss a bone to a dog. I am thinking that he has some claim on the life that he has given back, and that the other person should spend a little of it in doing something for him."

"And, pray, what has his being a gentleman to do with all this?" asked Mr. Cameron, whose wrath took the form of sarcasm. "Suppose that Colson or Lynn had saved your life, would you have wished to have him at the house?"

"Neither of them would have wished to come."

"That is not honest, Jean. You know that they would; but you would never ask them, except to one of your camp dances. You would not if they had saved your life twenty times."

"I should try to do something for them, something that they would like; but if people are not of your kind there is no use in inviting them. There is no kindness in it in the end."

"Perhaps," said her father, "there would prove to be no kindness in the end in what you wish to do for Loring."

"Very well. There is no use in arguing with a Scotchman; but I warn you that I shall make it

up to him in friendliness. The other men can scarcely object to that."

With these words Jean rose from the steps and, passing through the door, entered the little living-room where she picked up a guitar from the window-seat, and to its accompaniment began to sing in a low voice. What was the song she chose? Why, it was "Jock o' Hazeldean." If ever a song expressed flat mutiny it is that one, and it lost nothing in expression from Jean Cameron's rendering, from the beginning where the heroine refuses to be commanded or cajoled, to the last line where "She 's o'er the border and awa' wi' Jock o' Hazeldean."

Mr. Cameron was justified in being angry; but who could resist a voice like Jean Cameron's? Evidently not Jean's father, for when the girl came out again and smiling laid her hand upon his shoulder, Mr. Cameron relaxed the grimness of his expression.

"Well, well, lassie, we will see what can be done for your gentleman engineer," he said encouragingly; "but don't be 'o'er the border and awa'" with Jock, till we know a little more about him, and about what is thought of him in Hazeldean."

CHAPTER V

"OH, Loring. Have you heard the news?" Stephen, on his way to breakfast, on the morning of the Fourth of July, stopped until McKay joined him.

"No. What is the matter?"

"There is to be a half holiday to-day," went on McKay.

"The devil there is! I did not know that such things existed this side of heaven."

"In which case you would never see one," laughed McKay. "But to-day there is to be one. In my opinion, we owe it to Miss Cameron's influence with her father. Every one can knock off work at twelve o'clock. Look at the notice!"

On the office wall, beneath the usual "*No Entrada—Oficina*," was a big placard which conveyed the news in English and Spanish. Stephen read it with satisfaction.

"I think that will make breakfast taste rather well. What is your opinion, Mac?"

"That comes pretty close to my jedgments,"

answered McKay. "Hey, Wah, you crazy Chinaman; quit hammering that gong!"

This last was addressed to Hop Wah, who was standing on the porch of the eating house, hammering with a railroad spike upon an iron gong.

"Me hab to. Else me lazy pig bludders allee late. La, la, boom, boom! Breakfas'. Nice hot cakes. Oh, lubbly, lubbly cakes; eggs this mornin'. Goodee canned eggs. Oh, lubbly; la, la" — Wah fled precipitately into the kitchen, as Loring and McKay made gestures of killing him.

They were the first at the mess, and while the sleepy stragglers filed in, one by one, they ate their oatmeal in comfort. They took a lazy pleasure in watching the surprise, and listening to the ejaculations, with which the news of the half holiday was received. "Thin Jim," who always presided at the head of the table, on account of his so-called "boarding house arm," which enabled him to be of vast service as a waiter, professed to be so astounded at the news as to be incapable of performing his duties.

"What with a dance on Washington's birthday, and a half holiday to-day, why, we're becomin' sort of a leisure class," he remarked.

"Well, look out that you don't deteriorate

under the strain," laughed Loring. "Has any one a match?" The only real system in all Loring's habits of life was his custom of rising early enough to have time for a smoke between breakfast and work.

In the afternoon the camp was alive with shouts and hilarity. On the slag dump two baseball games were in progress, of such excitement that the umpires had early withdrawn; while some one had established in the gulch an impromptu shooting gallery, whence the quick rattle of reports told of financial success.

Stephen sat with Duncan on the steps of the assay office while the latter checked up his figures for the morning's work.

"The ore from Number Three is running six per cent these days," he exclaimed, as he tossed his note-book into the office.

Together they watched the trail leading out from the camp, down which rode little groups of horsemen, lounging in the saddle. The smoke from their cigarettes trailed thinly blue behind them.

"There goes domesticity for you, Steve!" said Duncan. He pointed to a family group riding by. Old Tom Jenkins, the smelter boss, with

his wife, was starting for a trip to the river. Three children were strung in various attitudes across their saddles.

"It seems as if every one were going for a ride," commented Stephen. "Shall we fall in line with the popular amusement?"

"I have n't got a horse," answered Duncan, "and all the company *caballos* will be out to-day. I heard old Hodges down at the corral after lunch cursing like a pirate at the amount of saddling that he had to do. Right in the midst of his growling, Miss Cameron came along, and wanted a horse. The old man pretty nearly fell over himself trying to accommodate her. There 's something about her that seems to affect people that way. Quite a convenient trait, I should think!"

Stephen agreed silently, and in his mind added considerably more, then strode off to the corral for his pony.

As he slung the saddle across his horse's back and cinched the girth, he fumbled a little, for his mind was not upon the task, but upon a certain curl, which defying combs or hairpins, waved capriciously at the turn of a girl's neck.

Horses, however, have little sympathy with

sentiment, and while Loring tugged absent-mindedly at the straps, the little beast puffed and squealed, trying to arrange for a comfortable space between his round, gray belly and the girth. Stephen, placing his left hand on the head-piece, and his right on the pommel, swung himself into the saddle, in spite of the pony's antics. Soon he was loping out of camp, and down towards the river. The clear sunshine struck his neck beneath his broad hat; the alkali dust tasted smoky and almost invigorating.

As he left the camp behind him, he laughed and sang softly to himself, beating with his unspurred heel the time of his song against his pony's ribs. He blessed the extravagance which had led him to invest half a month's pay in "*Muy Bueno*," as the horse was christened to indicate the owner's assurance that he was "very fine." Leaning forward, Loring playfully pulled "*Muy Bueno's*" ears. The pony shook its head in annoyance. This was no holiday for him.

After a short distance the ground began to rise, and the pony, with lowered head, buckled to his task, resolutely attacking the trail which zig-zagged up the steep mountainside.

Half way up the rise stood a saloon. As Loring

approached it, he heard roars of laughter. In it there was that quality which only liquor can produce. As he drew nearer he could see the reason for the laughter. Before the saloon was a girl on horseback, her pony balking, and flatly refusing to proceed. The doorway was full of half drunken miners, calling out advice of varied import. The saloon keeper, himself a bit flushed, called out: "She 's got Tennessee Bob's old pony. He never would go by here without taking a drink, and I reckon the horse sort of inherited the habit."

Stephen took in the situation at once. Riding up quickly, he cut the stubborn pony across the flank with his quirt. The animal quivered for a moment, then as another stinging blow fell, galloped on up the trail.

"Hell, Loring! what you want to do a thing like that for? Funniest thing I 've seen in a month," growled a man in the crowd.

Stephen only waved his hand in answer and rode on after the girl, whom he had no difficulty in recognizing. A couple of hundred yards of hard riding brought him up with her.

Jean's cheeks were still crimson, but it was as much from laughter as embarrassment.

"Really, Mr. Loring," she exclaimed, half breathlessly, "you seem to be always in the position of a rescuer."

"Your horses do seem to have a taste for adventure," he replied. "Perhaps I may be allowed to accompany you on your ride this afternoon," continued Stephen. "There might, you know, be other saloons which your pony was in the habit of visiting."

"I think it would be safer," assented Jean.

They were nearing the crest of the hill, and the trail broadened so that they could ride abreast. A bevy of quail flushed suddenly up from the ground, strumming the air sharply. A little further on, a jack-rabbit jumped into the center of the trail, looked about, then dove into the underbrush. To a mind in its normal condition, these things were but commonplaces. To Stephen it seemed as if all nature were in an exuberant mood. The very creak of the leather, or ring of steel, as now and then one of the horses' hoofs struck on stone, fell in with the tenor of his spirits. There are few men who could ride over the Arizona hills with Jean Cameron and doubt the gloriousness of existence.

At the summit they drew rein to breathe the

horses. Before them lay the valley of the "Dripping Spring Wash." For miles the belt of white sand in the bottom stretched away darkened with clumps of drab sage-brush, or with tall wavy lines which they knew must be cactus. Whiter than the sand, far out in the valley, a tent gleamed. Here and there a few moving specks betokened range cattle. Framing it all were great mountains, as irregular and barren as floe ice, — blue, purple, and brown, with streaks of yellow where the hot rays of the sun struck upon bare earth. All the detail of the rocky contour showed in the clear air. The mountains at the end of the valley, forty miles away, seemed as distinct as if within a mile. In silence the riders sat their horses, looking straight before them.

"I never knew how big life could be until I saw Arizona," exclaimed Jean.

"I never knew how big life could be until —"

"Until what, Mr. Loring?"

Loring's answer was to guide the horses into the trail that led down to the Wash.

In a short while they reached the bottom, and rode out into the valley, where wandering "mavericks," or faggot-laden burros had pounded innumerable hard paths.

Jean shook the bridle of her horse, and calling back over her shoulder, "Shall we run them?" was off in a flash. Stephen, urging on his pony, soon caught up with her, and side by side they galloped hard up the valley. Leaning forward in his saddle, he could watch the rich color rush across the girl's face, as the speed set her blood dancing. Her head was tossed backward, throwing out the clean molded chin, and perhaps emphasizing the hint of obstinacy concealed in its rounded finish. Her bridle hand lay close on the horse's neck, the small gloved fingers crushing the reins. From the amount of attention that Loring was, or rather was not, paying to his horse, he richly deserved a fall; but the fates spared him. Perhaps they, too, were engaged in watching the girl.

With a sigh, Jean pulled her horse down to a walk.

"That was splendid! Why can't one always be riding like that?"

Loring looked at her, amused by the exuberance of her spirits.

"A bit hard on the horses as a perpetual thing, otherwise perfect," he answered.

She turned to him suddenly. "Have you no enthusiasms?"

"I used to have," answered Stephen, "but they were not of exactly the right kind. In fact they made me what I am."

"What are you?" she asked, looking at him directly.

"A failure — and rather worse, because I am a poor failure. There is just enough left in me to make me realize the truth, but not enough to compel me to do anything about it."

Jean thought for a minute, then, with sincere pity in her face, she asked, "Why?"

Stephen had resolved never to speak of his past, of the golden opportunities lost, of the friends who would have helped if they could; but as he looked at her, at the slightly parted lips, at the frank sympathy that shone from her face, he knew that here was some one who could understand and perhaps help.

Slowly at first, controlling the breaks in his voice, then more evenly, he told her of start after start, of the relatives who had disowned him, of drifting and drifting. "Now, here I am, running a hoist! Well, it is probably the best thing of which I am capable and I owe it to you and

your father that I have so good a place. I have been tried and found wanting in almost every way the Lord could invent, and," he tried rather unsuccessfully to smile, "I think I am down and out."

Jean reached out her hand to him, and pressed his warmly, with the proud confidence of not being misunderstood.

"Mr. Loring, I do not believe it. You may have been and done all that you say, but you have still the battle ahead of you. I owe my life to you. You risked yours to save me. I will not let you go on throwing yourself away, without trying to help you. I thank you for what you have told me. I think that I understand. It is hard perhaps for a girl to realize the truth; but I do so want to help you! Here in Arizona you have a fresh chance. Go on and win — and never forget that I am going to stand by you."

Stephen set his teeth and looked straight ahead of him. Every nerve within him tingled with the desire to bow his head over the small hand that lay on his, to crave, he knew not what. Then he lifted his head and looked at her. "I will try — and God bless you!"

So absorbed had the man and girl been in

their talk, that they had failed to realize that the soft, swift night of Arizona was overtaking them. Clouds too were gathering in the west and obscuring the sunset before its time. Jean noticed it at length and took alarm

"We must turn and ride fast," she said hastily. "My father will be worried if we are late. I think I remember this path which cuts into the trail again farther on and is a shorter way. Let us take it!"

Without waiting for Loring's assent, she dashed off to the left. Stephen followed her with some misgiving. He had known too much of the devious windings of these half-beaten paths and would have chosen the longer way around in confidence of its proving the shorter way home.

On and on they rode in the gathering darkness till at length they could scarcely see a yard ahead of them, and were forced to drop the reins on the necks of the ponies, realizing that in such a situation instinct is a far safer guide than reason. Loring took the lead, and rode slowly and cautiously, peering about him in the vain hope of discovering the right way. At length his pony balked suddenly and threw back its ears. "Stop!" Stephen called back, as he slip-

ped hastily from the saddle and took a step forward to investigate the cause of "*Muy Bueno's*" fright. One step was enough, for it showed him that the ground dropped off into space at his very feet. "Whew!" he whistled softly to himself. Then aloud he said: "I am afraid, Miss Cameron, that you must dismount. Wait and let me help you!" But before he could reach her the girl was out of her saddle and at his side. She saw their danger and paled at its nearness. Then she said quietly: "Of course it is my fault; but we need not talk about that now. The question is, what are we going to do?"

"The only thing we can do is to grope our way back by the way we have come, and hope by good luck to reach the main trail again. If the moon would only come up, we might at least get our bearings," said Loring.

"We ought to be somewhere near the Bingham mine," Jean reflected aloud. "Mr. Bingham is a friend of my father's and we have ridden over to supper in his camp once or twice. But I don't know — I have lost all faith in my skill as a pilot."

Loring took hold of the bridles and turned the ponies. Then mounting, they rode into the

darkness, where a slight thread of openness seemed to show their path. Time and time again the horses, sure-footed as they were, stumbled and went down on their knees, only to pick themselves up with a shake and a plunge. Wandering cattle had beaten so many blind paths through the chaparral or between the rocks that the riders were often forced to stop and retrace their way, searching for new openings. Stephen was afraid. It was a new sensation for him to have any dread of the uncertain; but every time that Miss Cameron's horse slipped or hesitated he turned nervously in the saddle on the lookout for some accident to her. His was a nature which danger elated, but responsibility depressed. Had he been alone he would have rejoiced in the stubbornness of the way, in the rasp of the cactus as his boots scratched against it, in the uncertain sliding and the quick checking of his horse; but now they worried him, so intent was he on the safety of the girl with him. He knew that only good fortune could find their way for them before sunrise and he prayed for good fortune in a way that made up for his past unbelief in such a thing.

Jean's cheerfulness and acceptance of condi-

tions only made it harder for him, as, with every sense alert, he led the way towards what he hoped was their goal.

And fear was not the only emotion that struck at his heart. Mingled with his anxiety was a rushing glow of happiness, of fierce exultation such as he had never experienced in his life. The fact that under his care, alone in the Arizona night, was the girl whom he loved, thrilled and shook him. The soft note of confidence in her voice, her unconscious appeal to him for protection, made the stinging blood rush to his face, made him crush the bridle in a grip as of a vise. "Alone!" he murmured. "Is there in God's world any such aloneness as two together when the world is a countless distance away, when each second is precious as a lifetime!" His voice, when he spoke to her, sounded to him dry and forced. It was only by superhuman control that when he guided her horse to the right or left he did not cry out his need of her. Yet through all the electric silence he knew that he had no right to speak of love, no right even to love her. His mood was of that intensity which cares not for its reaction on others. Through it all he did not think or imagine that she could

care; and yet he was happy, happy with that joy of a great emotion so sweeping as not to know pain from pleasure and not to care. For the first time in his life he realized what it was to live, not to think or to care, but to *live*.

And she? She could not have been a woman and not have known, even though the imprisoned words had not escaped; but from knowing to caring is a very long road, and not only has it many turnings, but often it doubles upon itself.

After an hour of this blind riding, they suddenly found themselves following a well-beaten track. A tip of bright gold appeared from behind the black mountains, then a crescent, then a semicircle, and almost before they realized it the trail was flooded with the splendor of the full-rounded moon. As they watched, they were startled by the soft thud of a horse's hoofs behind them. Stephen, a bit uneasy as to the newcomer, wheeled his horse sharply to meet him, and slipped his riding gauntlet from his right hand, prepared to shoot or to shake as the occasion might necessitate. He was greatly surprised, when the stranger drew abreast of them, to hear him exclaim in a cheerful bass voice: "Miss Cameron! How did you come here?"

"That is just what we want to know. The only thing we want to know more is how to get out by any other way than past the cliff which we almost rode over in the darkness. This is Mr. Loring, Mr. Bingham, one of the hoist engineers at Quentin. Darkness overtook us while we were riding, and I thought that I knew a short cut. I did not, it seems, and here we are."

"Yes, and a mighty narrow escape you had if you were up by the divide yonder. It drops off a good five hundred feet. Cleverness of your horses, I suppose. Positively uncanny the instinct of those little beasts! Well, as it happens, you have been riding only a few rods from the path which you were looking for, only that winds around the divide, and not over it. I am on my way to our camp just below here. You 'll stop to supper with us, of course," he added, as the lights of his camp suddenly twinkled from behind a spur in the hills.

"Not to-night, thank you," Jean answered. "I am afraid that my father will be worried as it is, and would soon be scouring the mountains for us."

"It might look a little as if you 'd run off to-

gether," Mr. Bingham chuckled with obtuse humor. Suddenly Jean, who had been all gratitude, felt that she could, with great pleasure, see him go over the cliff which they had avoided. She would have liked to reply to his remark with something either jocular or haughty; but instead she was conscious of a stiff, shy pause, broken by Loring's query as to how the ore was running in the Bingham mine.

"Decidedly he is a gentleman," reflected Jean, and then the scene of her talk with her father flashed over her, — the porch, the living-room, the guitar, the song "She 's o'er the border and awa' wi' Jock o' Hazeldean."

Suddenly she laughed aloud. Both men turned in their saddles to see what could have caused her sudden mirth. "Only an echo," Jean explained. "It sounded like a girl's voice. It is gone now. Don't stop!"

Mr. Bingham seemed so grieved to have them pass the camp without dismounting that Jean, realizing that a neglect of his proffered hospitality would wound him unnecessarily, consented to take a cup of coffee. Mrs. Bingham brought it to them with her own hands, talking to them eagerly as they drank it. Mr.

Bingham drew out his flask and offered it to Stephen; but with a glance at Jean, he declined it and the girl noted the sacrifice with satisfaction.

The coffee finished, Jean and Loring bade a hasty farewell to their hosts, who grieved over their parting with that true Western hospitality born of the desolate hills, the long reaches of sparsely populated country, and the loneliness of camp life.

The horses were tired; but their riders had no notion of sparing them, and rode as fast as the roughness of the trail permitted. Mr. Bingham's ill-timed words had jarred upon their companionship, and the horses' hoofs alone broke the silence which had fallen between them.

It was eleven o'clock when they reached Quentin, and Mr. Cameron was pacing the porch impatiently, peering out into the blackness where the moonlight pierced it, as they rode up to the shack.

"We are all safe, father; we merely took a wrong turning," Jean called aloud as they drew rein.

"Yes," observed Mr. Cameron with a stub-

born ring in his voice. "I was afraid that you had."

Jean perceived her father's frame of mind instantly, and the Cameron in her rose to meet the Cameron in him.

"We have spent a very agreeable afternoon, however," she said in clear, determined tones; "at least I have, so I can scarcely regret our adventure, though I am sorry to have caused you anxiety."

To Loring's surprise, instead of slipping out of her saddle as she had done before, she waited for him to lift her down. As he did so, she felt his lips brush her sleeve. It was done after the fashion of a devotee, not of a lover, yet the girl's pulses bounded with a sense of elation and power. She held a man's soul in her hands. Yes, she knew now with a sense of certainty what she had only suspected before, — that Loring loved her. How she felt herself, how much response the man's passion had power to call out in her, she took no time to think; but she resolved to use this new power for his good. It should be the beginning of better things than he had ever known. Oh, yes, love could do anything. She had always heard that.

That night Loring, too, would have sworn that the turning point in his life had come, that never again could he prove unworthy of the trust in him which had shone from Jean Cameron's eyes and pulsed in the strong clasp of her hand. A woman's faith had saved other men worse than he. Why could he not surely rely upon its power to save him, too?

One who knew him well might have answered: "Because you are both too strong and too weak to be saved by anything from without. Your regeneration, if it comes, will come from no such gentle approaches and soft appeals, but through the stress and storm of deep experience, through the struggle and agony of overwhelming remorse. So it must be with some men."

CHAPTER VI

FROM the time of their ride together, Jean's thoughts were much more occupied with Loring than they had been before. The consciousness of her father's opposition was an added stimulus, partly by reason of her inherited obstinacy, and partly because she felt that Loring was misunderstood, and all her loyalty was engaged in his behalf. She felt a pride in having discovered what she thought were his possibilities, and she was determined that the world should acknowledge them too. In the face of Mr. Cameron's disapproval she did not venture to ask Loring to the house; but whenever they met in the camp or on the road she made a point of stopping to talk with him and inquiring how things were going at the hoist.

It must be set down to Loring's credit that none of these meetings were of his planning, for as his love for her deepened, as it did day by day, he felt more and more keenly the barriers

which he himself had raised between them. He felt how far wrong he had been in assuming that his life had been wholly his own and that his failures could touch no one but himself. He did not dare to construct the future, but clung to the present with realization of its blessings. He felt a glow of pride in Jean's friendship for him, and a steady reliance on her faith in him. Week after week went by and the fiber within him strengthened. The belief in the worthwhileness of life came to him with a splendid rush of conviction that was not to be denied.

The depth of happiness is, unfortunately, however, no criterion of its duration. One evening the stage, after depositing at the office its load of mail and newcomers, lurched jerkily up the incline that led to Mr. Cameron's house, instead of being driven to the corral as usual. Loring watched it and his spirits dropped like a barometer. An incident may easily depress high spirits, though it takes an event to raise low ones. The event which had raised his spirits to-day was a meeting with Jean Cameron while Mr. Cameron was inspecting Number Three shaft. Jean had accompanied her father to the hoist and Loring had been able to talk with her

for a longer time than usual. The incident that had depressed was merely a slight break in the routine. He did not usually notice the stage. Why should he do so now? What was more natural than that Mr. Cameron should have some visitor?

"Probably one of the directors of the company, or some official," Stephen reflected. "Perhaps that was why that new saddle was sent down to the corral."

Loring shortened his day by dividing it into periods. A period consisted of the time required to raise ten buckets of ore. At the end of each period he permitted himself to glance over his shoulder, where just beyond the corner of the ore cribs he could see the porch of Mr. Cameron's house. Now and then he was rewarded by a glimpse of Jean reading or talking to her father. Loring was very honest with himself and never before the requisite amount of work was accomplished did he give himself his reward. This morning he had gone through the usual routine, lowered the day's shift and patiently waited to hoist the first result of their labor. It had been a severe strain on his subjective integrity, when, after he had raised nine buckets of ore, the ex-

pected tenth turned out to be merely a load of dulled drills sent up to be sharpened. Exasperated, he watched while the "nipper" boys unloaded the drills and put in the newly sharpened sets which they had brought from the blacksmith's. One little fellow either unduly conscientious, or with a wholesome dread of the wrath of the mine foreman, laboriously counted the new drills from the short "starters" to the six- and seven-foot drills that complete the set.

"Oh, they 're all right, Ignacio," called Stephen. "Chuck them in! *'Sta 'ueno.*"

The next time his hopes were fulfilled, and bucket number ten appeared on the surface. As soon as it was clear of the shaft and swung onto the waiting ore car, Stephen turned for his long-desired glance. Tied to the fence in front of Mr. Cameron's house was another horse beside Jean's pony, which he knew so well. As he looked, the door opened and Jean appeared. She was too far away for him to distinguish her features and yet she seemed to him to have an air of buoyancy which he had not before remarked. A man stepped out of the doorway behind her. His tan riding-boots were brilliant with a gloss that is unknown in

a world where men shine their own shoes. The sunlight positively quivered upon them. Jean and the stranger mounted, and as they rode nearer to the hoist Stephen observed that the man was singularly good-looking, but "too sleek by half," he growled vindictively, as he turned to his work again.

The stranger turned out to be a young cousin of Mr. Cameron's, ostensibly in camp to see "western life"; but Stephen had his own opinion as to that. In a week Loring disliked the cousin, in a fortnight he loathed him, and all without ever having exchanged a word with the dapper youth. A man who by necessity is compelled to wear a flannel shirt and trousers frayed by tucking within high boots, is always prone to consider a better dressed man as dapper. For a week Stephen had not had a chance to speak with Miss Cameron. The cousin, "Archibald Iverach," as the letters which Loring saw at the post-office indicated to be his name, may not have been intentionally responsible; but to his shadow-like attendance on Jean, Loring attributed the result and accordingly prayed for his departure. "To be sure he is her guest; but that is no reason why he should have too

good a time," he reflected gloomily. "She must be enjoying his visit or she would not keep him so long."

Had Loring overheard a conversation which took place at Mr. Cameron's table the day before Iverach's return to the East, he would have felt his affection for that gentleman still more increased. The conversation had turned upon the types of men in camp. Iverach's estimate of them had been as disparaging as theirs of him. The only men with whom he had come in contact had annoyed him as having no place in his neatly constructed world. "Cheap independence" was the phrase that he had used to describe their manner. He had good cause to know this independence for one day he had addressed McKay in a rather lofty fashion, and what McKay had said in return could only be constructed from a careful and diligent reading of the unexpurgated parts of all the most lurid books in the world combined. The retort had been worthy of a territory where the championship swearing belt is held by one who can swear between syllables. His remarks had reflected on Iverach's parentage on the male and female sides, it had enlarged on his past,

expatiated on his probable future, dilated upon his present. The pleasantest of the places that awaited him, according to McKay, was hotter than Tombstone in August. His looks and character had been described in a way that had surpassed even McKay's fertile imagination. Iverach had always imagined that he would fight a man for using such language to him; yet for some reason he had not hastened to express offense. He was not a coward; but he was not adventurous nor easily aroused to anger when it might have unpleasant results. Consequently to-day, when he finished his remarks about the men whom he had seen by observing that they were "the scum of the earth," he was guilty of no conscious exaggeration.

Mr. Cameron paid no attention to his cousin's remarks. He had rarely found them rewarding and therefore with his usual Scotch economy he declined to waste interest upon them. Jean, however, for some reason took the trouble to continue the discussion.

"Have you met a man named Loring, one of the hoist engineers?" she asked quietly.

Iverach looked up suddenly. "Loring? What is his first name?"

"Stephen."

"I have not met him here; but if he is the man I think he is, I happen to have heard something of him in the East. A friend of his asked me to keep an eye out for him if I came to any of the camps in Arizona. In fact, he told me to keep two eyes open for him, one to find him with, and the other to look out for him after I had found him. He intimated that Loring was not a reliable character, to say the least."

"A friend of his, did you say?"

"I judged that he had been at one time, but from the trend of his conversation his friendship must have been a thing of the dim past. Among other pleasant things about Loring he told me that —"

"Did he say anything about his ability as a hoist engineer? That, I think, is the only thing with which we are concerned here," interrupted Jean. "You know, Archie, there is a proverb to the effect that 'a man's past is his own.'"

"Then all I can say is that Loring is not to be envied his ownership," Iverach went on, ignoring the danger signal of Jean's slightly contemptuous manner. "And as for discussing

his past, I cannot see any harm in repeating what every one knows about a man."

Ordinarily Mr. Cameron was the most fair-minded of men, and judged people by what he knew of them, not by what he heard; but he had a particular antipathy to Loring, caused by dislike of his type, and also he was not sorry to have Jean hear a few truths about the man whose companionship he dreaded for her as much as he resented her championship of him.

"What was it you were going to say about Loring?" he asked of Iverach, as he handed him a cigar.

Iverach paused to clip it carefully with a gold cigar-cutter that hung from his watch-chain. "Of course it is only hearsay that I am repeating — " Archibald began hesitatingly.

"Then why repeat it?" asked Jean ironically.

"Oh, the most interesting things in the world are those that you accept on hearsay," he laughed. "I forget the details of Loring's history, but this friend intimated that Loring, when engaged to his guardian's daughter, borrowed large sums of money from the guardian, and — well, neither the engagement nor the money ever materialized and Stephen Loring

is not much sought after in that neighborhood. I met the girl once," he went on, "and I don't blame Loring. She was the kind of young woman whose eyes light up only over causes; but the money part of the story, if true, is rather an ugly fact. Dexterity with other people's money is not an agreeable form of deftness."

"Utterly contemptible," snapped Mr. Cameron, flicking the ashes from his cigar onto the table with a prodigal gesture, only to brush them onto an envelope with the afterthought of an exact nature.

Jean rose and walked toward the door.

"At what time do you ride this afternoon?" her cousin called after her.

"Thanks," replied Jean, without turning, "but I shall not be able to ride this afternoon, I am intending to spend the time in making a pair of curtains for this window. I do not like the view of the hoist."

Iverach's face fell, for he was leaving Quentin the next day, and he had counted much upon this last interview. "Can't the curtains wait until to-morrow?" he remonstrated.

"No, they must be finished at once," replied Jean with decision.

"Why this burst of domestic energy?" queried Mr. Cameron. "You know that you have not taken a needle in your hand since you have been in the camp."

"I intend to change my habits in many ways," Jean responded, pressing her lips together firmly.

"I beg of you not to change at all," said Iverach. "It is impossible to improve a perfect person. However, since you are in the domestic mood, I wonder if you would take pity on a helpless bachelor and take a stitch in my riding-gloves for me?"

"Riding-gloves are a luxury, while curtains are a necessity," replied Jean firmly. "However, if you will give the gloves to me, I will see that our Chinaman mends them. There is nothing that he cannot do."

For some minutes after Jean had left the room, her cousin contemplated the end of his cigar. It was hard for him to twist her expressions into denoting a mood favorable to his complacency, so he spent an unpleasant half hour. At last, giving up all hope of her reappearance, he moodily set forth alone on his ride. He realized that in the Western setting he did

not appeal to Jean Cameron, and only hoped that when she should return to the East, his deficiencies would be less apparent, while his advantages would show more clearly. He therefore concluded to defer putting his fate to the touch until circumstances should prove more propitious.

The curtains took some time in the making. Jean sewed them with a preoccupied elaboration such as she was not accustomed to bestow upon such tasks. She had been startled by the effect of her cousin's words upon her, and now stared at the hem of the curtains with a slight frown. She had thought her interest in Stephen to be purely abstract and impersonal, and yet it was not pleasant to think of the person in whom she was even abstractly interested as having been concerned in a dubious financial transaction. It certainly added interest to the problem of his regeneration; but nevertheless it abated the zeal for solving that problem, by making it seem not worth while.

Stephen rejoiced when the day came for Iverach to leave Quentin. He hoped that now his relations with Miss Cameron would be resumed. He was amazed to see how much he

had come to rely on his glimpses of her as the inspiration of his existence. The first time that he saw her, however, she passed him with a cool nod in which it would have been hard for any one to find encouragement or inspiration. When this coolness was repeated on several occasions he was puzzled. Then he made up his mind that the underlying reason was the cousin, and in this he was certainly correct, though not in the way he supposed. For the first time he began to realize that the work at the hoist was monotonous.

The Devil has three great allies, natural depravity, aimless activity, and ennui, and this last is his most trusted, subtle, and reliable agent, especially when coupled with depression.

CHAPTER VII

FOR three days it had been raining in camp, and the roads were mired with brownish red 'dobe mud. In the tents the little stoves failed to dry the reeking air. The ponies looked miserable, human beings hopeless. Men tracked into the office, wet and disgusted, their dirty "slickers" dripping little pools of water wherever they stood. The rain fell with a dull rattle on the galvanized iron roofing, steady, relentless. Even the "shots" from the workings sounded dull and dejected in the heavy atmosphere. Every one was irritable and in an unpleasant frame of mind.

Rain in Arizona is rare; but when it does come it is the coldest, wettest, slimiest rain in the world. It rains from above, from below, from the side. It dissolves rubber; it takes the heat from fire. Water-tight buildings are mere sport for it. It rains in big drops that splash, in fine drizzle that penetrates, in sheets

that drench. The soft rock melts and becomes mud. The dirt dissolves and becomes quicksand. Empty gulches become torrents; small streams become rivers. Even the "Gila monsters," those slimy, mottled, bottle-eyed, lizard-shaped reptiles, give up in despair, while mere man has no chance at all for happiness and comfort.

Stephen came back from his work at the hoist, soaked to the skin, and sick. To add to his discouragement he found orders to work a double shift waiting for him in his tent — the engineer of the eleven o'clock, or "graveyard," shift being incapacitated. He threw himself down on his cot, cursing the squeak of the rusty springs. His feet felt like moist lumps of clay. The dampness of his shirt sent a numb feeling through his stomach. Lynn, his tent-mate, was on shift, so there was nothing to do but stare at the one ornament of the tent, a battered tin alarm clock, which, ticking with exasperating monotony, hung from the ridge-pole of the tent. The sole reading matter at hand was an old copy of the Denver *Post*. Stephen knew this almost by heart; but he picked it up and began to reread it.

"Be a Booster! Get the convention for your city! Don't go to sleep!"

The words, in flaming red and black headlines, irritated him. Throwing the paper aside, he amused himself by drawing his fingernail along the wet canvas of the tent, and watching the water ooze through the weave. Occasionally from outside he could hear the cursing of the coke wagon drivers, and the merciless crack of their whips. In his mind he could see almost as well as if he had been outside, the six quivering, straining horses, their haunches worn raw by the traces, the creaking wagon, up to its hubs in mud, and the slipping of the rusty brake shoes.

As he lay there in quiet misery, with renewed strength the utter hopelessness of his life came to him. It was not so much the thought of the present that crushed, but the knowledge that for years a life like this was all that lay before him. The ride of three odd months ago with Jean Cameron had awakened him to visions of things that lay beyond him.

He shivered with cold, and pulled the dirty red blanket up over him. Uncalled for, the thought of the saloon up on the hill came into

his mind. He imagined himself leaning against a bar, the edge fitting comfortably into his side, drinking warm drinks, and feeling that life was worth while. He tried to drive the thought away. It was useless.

Jean Cameron for months now had been his idol, had seemed to him to represent his better self. With an effort he brought her face before him. The vision was all blurred. Her eyes seemed to look away from him. She seemed intangible, unreal, compared with the comfort which he knew that drink would bring.

"What is the use, anyhow?" he murmured to himself.

He turned irresolutely upon his cot, then he jumped up and out onto the floor.

"Oh, damn it, I will!" he exclaimed.

He jammed his hat down over his eyes, struggled into his drenched "slicker," and started out into the muddy road. As he waded down to the corral, his boots squashed in sodden resentment.

Loring for a moment wavered irresolute while he was saddling his pony.

"I won't," he muttered.

But even as he said it, he gave the last

turn to the cinch knot, and swung into the saddle.

Moodily he rode up the trail. It rained harder than ever. The pony slipped, slid, and scrambled. Stephen sat in the saddle, stiff as an image. His face was drawn with lines that were not pleasant to look upon. The corners of his mouth were drawn hard down, telling of tightly clenched teeth.

When he reached the saloon he dismounted, hastily tied his horse to a bush, and went in. In one corner of the shack a stove was burning warmly. The pine boards of the flooring were smooth and white.

The bar, which was made of packing boxes covered with oiled cloth, ran the whole length of the room on the right-hand side from the door. At the left-hand side were a couple of small green baize-covered tables. By these were seated several Mexicans, all more or less drunk. They were singing noisily. Along the wall behind the bar ran a shelf which supported a large array of bottles. Behind these, in imitation of the cheap gaudiness of a city saloon, was a long, cracked mirror. Two Colt revolvers lying grimly on the shelf gave a deli-

cate hint to guests to behave themselves, and to pay their bills.

The Mexicans looked in a stupid, vacant way at Loring, then went on with their singing. The barkeeper was leaning against the wall, biting the end from a cigar, and at the same time whistling. This accomplishment was made possible by the fact that two front teeth were missing. It was rumored that in addition to smoking and whistling, he could curse and expectorate, all at the same time.

The possessor of these remarkable accomplishments greeted Stephen in a friendly fashion. They had often before met in the camp, when Hankins came down from the saloon for supplies.

"Well, now, Mr. Loring, I'm glad to see you. Mean weather out, ain't it? First time you 've been up to our diggings, I guess," he said, while he gripped Stephen's hand with a crushing grasp.

"Yes, this is the first time I have had a chance to drop in," rejoined Loring.

Some one rode up to the door, and with heavy tread, and jangling of spurs, came stamping into the saloon.

"How are you stacking up, Jackie?" asked Hankins of the newcomer. "Say, Mr. Loring, I want you to know my partner; Mr. Jackson, shake hands with Mr. Loring." The introduction accomplished, he stepped back behind the bar.

"What are you goin' to have to drink, gents? This one is on the house."

"Thanks! Whisky for me, please," answered Loring.

"Whisky? All right. I have some pretty good stuff here. No more kick to it than from a little lamb. Have some too, Jackie? I thought so."

Hankins poured the golden fluid into three gray-looking glasses.

"Regards, gents!" he said in a businesslike tone of voice, raising his glass as he spoke.

"Regards," echoed Loring, emptying his glass at a gulp.

The whisky sent a warm glow through his frame.

"That was good," he said, in a judicial tone of voice. "Now won't you gentlemen take something with me?"

"Well, I don't care if I do," answered Hankins.

The same formula, "Regards," was repeated.

Loring leaned in comfort against the bar. The attitude, unfortunately, was not strange to him. Time and time again, on Stephen's invitation, the glasses were refilled, while every now and then Hankins insisted, "One on the house." After the first two drinks, however, the latter and his partner drank only beer, while Loring continued to drink straight whisky. The other men had one by one departed, so that Loring and his companions were left alone.

Stephen's face began to burn. He caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror that hung behind the bar. Somehow the dull-eyed, white face which looked back at him seemed to have no connection with the radiant creature that he felt himself to be.

At this juncture Jackson made a suggestion.

"What do you say to a little game, gents?"

"By — all — means," exclaimed Loring, emphasizing each word as if it were the last of the sentence.

Hankins, stooping behind the bar, brought up a pack of cards.

"Here's an unopened deck," he said. With a queer little side look at his partner, he went

on. "I 'll get even with you for our last game, Jackie."

Stephen, with footsteps that came down very hard, walked over to one of the tables. Then he stopped.

"I — have n't — got — much — money — here," he said. He enunciated with the heavy, precise diction of a man who knows, but will not believe that he is drunk.

"That 's all right," said Jackson. "Your I. O. U. goes with us. We ain't like a boardin'-house keeper I used to know in Los Angeles, who had a sign hung out over his place: 'We only trust God.'"

Stephen and Jackson sat down at the table, and the latter began to shuffle the cards vigorously.

"Another whisky, please," called Stephen to Hankins. He spoke as if a "whisky please" were a special sort of drink.

"A beer for me too," called Jackson. Hankins brought the drinks on a little tin tray. Before taking each glass from it, he mechanically clicked the bottom against the edge of the tray.

Stephen fumbled in his pocket for change.

"Don't pay now," drawled Jackson. "Drinks is on the game. Winner shells up for the pleasure he has had."

Hankins joined them at the table, remarking as he sat down: "What 's the chips wuth?" He nodded assent to Stephen's rather indistinct answer.

"Freeze-out? Play till some one goes broke? Let her drive, Jackie!"

Jackson dealt with rapid precision, emphasizing each round by banging his own card down hard on the table. All looked at their hands, while the dealer drawled softly: "Kyards, gents? Kyards — three for you, Mr. Loring?"

For three hours they played. Every little while Hankins rose, and brought more drinks.

"On the game, gents, on the game!" he exclaimed each time.

Sometimes one was ahead, sometimes another, but no one had any decided advantage. Stephen played mechanically. The voices of the other men seemed to him far away, and indistinct.

Then the luck changed, and Loring began to win steadily. His success drew him on. He played recklessly, but by some sport of fate con-

tinued to win. He had a stiff smile upon his lips, and was evidently playing blindly.

"Say, Hankie, I guess we are being bitten," remarked Jackson dryly.

"It sure looks that way. Mr. Loring here is a great player. We did n't know what we were up against, did we?"

In his maudlin condition these words delighted Stephen. With only a pair of threes in his hand he pulled in a stack of chips, on which the others had dropped out.

Hankins was shuffling, preparatory to his deal. As he twisted the cards in his fingers, he gave a vivid, if immoral, account of his last trip to Tucson. Loring's head was swimming, but he caught the words: "She was the stuff all right, all right."

Suddenly Jackson jumped to his feet, and stood as if listening intently.

"I guess your *caballo* must be loose, Mr. Loring; seems to me I hear him sort of stamping round outside. Did you hitch him tight?"

Loring staggered to the door and looked out. From the blackness came a gust of wind and rain that cooled his flushed forehead.

"I think he 's all right. Can't see anything

at all. Must have been wind you heard. Big, big wind outside."

During his absence from the table, Hankins had dealt. Stephen picked up his cards. At first he could not distinguish them. They seemed to be all a blur of color. Then it slowly dawned upon him that he held four kings and a jack. His head reeled with excitement.

"Any objection to raising limit?" he asked eagerly, with an unconcealed look of triumph upon his face.

"Wa-al, of course, if you want to, we 'll come along, just to make the game interesting," drawled Jackson; "I guess you have us stung all right. Only one card for you? Gawd, you must have a fat hand!"

Loring kept raising and raising, until he reached the limit of all that he owned in the world. Then, for drunk or sober, he was no man to bet what he did not have, he called. Throwing his cards face upwards upon the table, he reached unsteadily for the huge pile of chips.

"F-Four kings!" he shouted exultantly. "I — think — they are good."

Jackson looked at Stephen's half-shut eyes,

"'It seems like as if you was bitten, Mr. Loring,' said Hawkins." *Page 125*

at the heavy way his elbow rested on the table, and smiled. Then with a broad wink at Hankins, he exclaimed.

"Well, I 'll be damned. Ain't this the luck! Here 's four aces! By Gawd!"

"It seems like as if you was bitten, Mr. Loring," said Hankins. "Great game that was. Well, gents, have another drink now on the house."

Stephen, in a dazed manner, took his drink, then dimly there came into his mind his orders to work night shift.

"What — whatsh the time?" he asked.

"It 's close to ten," answered Jackson.

The faint idea kept crawling in Loring's mind: "Night shift, hoist, must go." He plunged out into the darkness, and tried to drag himself into the saddle.

When he had gone the two other men roared with laughter.

"That was easy," exclaimed Jackson, "but I guess we had better look after him a bit now, or he will be in trouble." They went out after Stephen, and found him still trying to climb into the saddle. Each time that he tried, he almost succeeded, then he swayed, and fell back onto

the muddy ground. The pony, under these unusual proceedings, was growing restive. They lifted Stephen onto the horse. He lurched, and almost fell off on the other side.

"Easy now. You 're all right," said Jackson.

Taking the pony by the bridle he led him into the saloon. With Loring swaying in the saddle, the horse walked listlessly up to the bar, while Hankins playfully pulled his tail.

"Great pony, that, Mr. Loring; he knows a good place, all right. He 'll take you down the trail fine as can be. He 's a wise one, for sure."

They led the pony to the door again, the hoofs creaking strangely on the wooden floor.

"Look out for your head, Mr. Loring! That 's good. *Á Dios* — good night!"

From the trail Loring's voice carried back. He was singing at the top of his lungs.

"Full right up to his ears!" ejaculated Hankins. "I hope he don't fall off and break his neck."

Meanwhile the faithful little horse trudged steadily down the trail, carrying his helpless master. There are few Arizona horses which do not understand the symptoms indicated by a limp

weight in the saddle, and meaningless tugs on the bridle.

The camp, save for the flare by the smelter, was unlit. The pony went straight to the corral, past all the dark, silent tents and shacks. The sound of the hoof-beats echoed very clearly in the stillness. At the corral Loring tried to dismount, and fell from the saddle hard. The shock roused his consciousness.

"Must be near 'leven. What, what wash I going — going to do at 'leven? Oh, yes. Hoist, extra shift." Leaving the poor pony standing still saddled in the rain, he started up the hill for the hoist.

Reaching the steps of the deserted *tienda*, he sat down and supported his head with his hands.

"I *guess* I must be — a bit — tight," he thought.

The world began to whirl, to drop suddenly, to rise, to twist. He bit his lips and pressed his knuckles hard against his temples.

"Must sober up!" he kept repeating to himself.

Sweat broke out all over him. He became ghastly ill. Lying at full length in the muddy

road, before the steps, he did not notice the rain that beat down upon him. Gradually he began to lose consciousness.

The whistle blew dull and discordant for the eleven o'clock shift.

CHAPTER VIII

As the echo of the whistle died away, Loring raised himself, and staggered to his feet. Not realizing what he did, he groped his way onward up the hill. As he passed the men hurrying home from the last shift, he noticed, as in a dream, the way in which the wet clothes clung to their skins, the heavy folds accentuated by the glare of the occasional electric light.

Hughson, in the hoist shed, was cursing volubly at his delay in coming. As soon as he saw Loring he grabbed his coat, and calling out a hurried imprecation, started down the hill.

Stephen had scarcely stepped to his place by the drum, when the indicator clanged sharply one bell. Mechanically he threw his weight against the lever, and shot the first bucket of ore mined by the shift high into the dim light, almost into the tripod framework upon which the cable hung.

Uncomprehendingly, he watched the figures outside bang down the iron coverings over the shaft, and wheel the clanking ore car onto the tracks beneath the suspended bucket. The men seemed to Loring to be possessed of magical deftness as they unshackled the full bucket, and clamped the swinging hook through the bar of the empty one. The loaded ore car bumped groaningly off on its journey down to the cribs, the iron coverings opened, and a voice called: "Lower!"

At times Stephen's head cleared somewhat, and he noticed every detail in the hoist shed. He stared at the way the shadows from the one electric light fell on the rough boards. The water jug in the corner, the disordered tool box, the little pile of oily waste by the boiler, all photographed themselves on his eye. He noticed the great pile of beams in the back of the shed, the timbering for the new shaft, lettered with huge blue stencils, and watched with interest the flare in the furnace when the Mexican stoker threw fresh armfuls of mesquite wood upon the fire.

Then again all was whirl, and he was obliged to grip his stool to keep from falling. His hand

clung to the control lever with damp, clinging pressure.

Every few minutes the gong would sound, telling that another load of ore was waiting to be raised. Once he ran the "skip" so high above the shaft, that it crashed into the framework. It seemed to be some one entirely disconnected with himself who fumbled with the winch, and lowered the bucket again, until the shrill: "O. K.! *'Sta 'ueno!*" from the darkness outside told of the proper level. Between the striking of the bells, Stephen puzzled over the meaning of the white painted bands on the cable, which should have told him at what level the bucket was.

The time seemed to drag endlessly. Still the buckets continued to come. Just outside the door of the shed he could see the peg board that indicated the tally of buckets raised. He swore at it bitterly. "Why can't the checker put in two pegs at a time, until the board is full, and the shift finished?" he thought.

Whenever the winch was in motion, the grating roar of the cable winding in or out seemed to be inside his own head. Steadily he became more and more bewildered. His will was rapidly

losing the desperate fight for control. Once he fell off his stool.

There was a slight delay in the work. The next bucket was slow in being signaled.

"What lazy men — what lazy men!" he murmured.

Then clear and sharp rang the signal: "Clang–Clang – Clang — Clang!" Loring was too dazed to remember that three bells before the one to hoist was the signal for "man on the bucket." The one bell telling to raise, or two to lower, had conveyed their meaning automatically to him. The sudden change was incomprehensible.

"Clang – Clang – Clang — Clang!" again the indicator rang. This time with a sharp, insistent sound.

"Perhaps they want it to come up fast. Oh, very, very fast," was the thought that came to him, and he threw the lever all the way over.

Fascinated, he watched the cable tearing past him on the drum.

"Funny — they — should — signal — that — way," he spoke aloud. "Perhaps — they — are — drunk — too."

Faster and faster whirled the reel. The mark for the four hundred level flashed by. Almost

in an instant the marking for the three hundred followed. The blur of white upon the cable, telling that the bucket was only two hundred feet below the surface seemed to come within a second. He did not see the marking for the last hundred feet.

Suddenly, out of the bowels of the earth shot the bucket. For a sixtieth of a second two figures, standing on the edge, were outlined. Loring heard a shriek, half drowned in a crash and roar, as the bucket, with its human freight, was hurled against the overhead supports.

He smiled foolishly, and hopelessly fingered the lever.

Outside, by the shaft mouth, all was in wild confusion. Shouts, curses, hoarse whispers, all were intermingled. Then came the sound of feet, tramping in unison, and men entered the shed carrying a — thing — its head driven into its shoulders. Loring looked — stared — then he knew.

Like a knife cutting into the mist of dizziness came realization. The truth burned its way into his mind, and sobered him.

"My God!" he sobbed. "The signal was for men on the bucket." It flashed upon him

what had happened. The men, standing upon the edge of the bucket, holding onto the cable, had been dashed into the tripod framework, which overhung the shaft mouth, a scant ten feet above the ground.

Shaking, as with ague, he stepped outside to the shaft.

A crowd of Mexicans were jabbering. The voices of several Americans carried above the soft slur of the Spanish. Some one was holding a lantern over the mouth of the shaft, and cautiously peering down. Up the hill came the sound of running feet.

"Here 's the Doc, now!" called some one.

They showed Dr. Kline the body on the floor of the hoist box. He merely glanced at it, then picking up a burlap sack laid it over the head.

"Where is the other man?" he asked curtly.

Some one, with a quick gesture, pointed towards the shaft. "Down there."

A small, close set ladder, for use in case of emergency, ran down the shaft. Down this two of the Americans started to climb. The group by the edge watched breathlessly, while the light of their lantern dropped — dropped — dropped.

For the first twenty feet the lantern illuminated the greasy sides of the shaft, bringing out clearly the knots and chinks in the boards. Then the light shrank into the darkness, became a mere dot. After a long minute the dot began to sway back and forth. But so far down was it that it seemed to have a radius only of inches.

"They have found him," breathed McKay, who had reached the scene. On the iron piping of the shaft pump tapped dully the signal to lower slowly. Loring started for his place at the engine.

"Get to hell out of here! You 've done enough harm for one night."

Hughson, with his white night-shirt half out of his trousers, his boots unlaced, and his eyes still heavy from sleep, shoved him aside and took hold of the lever. Slowly he lowered the "skip." It seemed to Loring an hour before it reached the bottom.

Then again on the pipe, for the bell-rope was broken, was rapped the signal.

"One – one – one — one." In the night air the clank of the taps on the metal sounded ghostly.

Slowly the bucket came to the surface. The two men who had descended were holding in it a swaying figure. Many hands lifted the figure gently to the ground. The doctor bent over it, then shook his head.

"Nothing doing," he said dryly, and they laid the body beside the other.

A commanding voice echoed through the group. It was Mr. Cameron's.

"Where is Loring?" he asked decisively.

Stephen, in the background, turned away, and, with a face like chalk etched with acid, stumbled down the hill. Complete agony possessed him. Hitherto, when he had failed, he had hurt himself alone. Now he was little better than a murderer. Drunk on duty, when men's lives were dependent upon him!

By some blind instinct he found his way to his tent, pulled back the flap, and entered. Lynn was snoring quietly in his corner. His boots lay on the floor, strange shapes in the dark. The alarm clock standing on the table close by his head ticked softly and monotonously.

Loring gasped for breath, swayed, and fell unconscious upon his cot.

The bodies of the two miners had been carried to the hospital, and with Hughson in charge of the hoist, the ore buckets were again coming up, when Mr. Cameron and McKay left the scene of the accident and through the darkness groped their way down the hill.

"Some one told me that he 'd seen Loring drinking this evening," said McKay.

"That explains all," answered Mr. Cameron gruffly. "I should have known! I should have known! After the experience with men that I have had, to put a man like Loring in a position of responsibility! I am the one who is to blame for this. And yet he did seem to have pulled himself together. This will finish him, though. Mark me, McKay, before this he has been going to hell with the brakes on. Now he will run wild. Two men dead! That is a rather heavy reckoning for Mr. Stephen Loring to settle with himself. If I did not owe so much to him, I would have him in prison for to-night's work."

McKay nodded solemnly.

"I liked him a lot. I thought that he had different stuff in him. As you say, this will probably finish his chances; but it may," he

hesitated, "it may make a man out of him. If this don't, God himself can't help him."

"What were the names of the men?" asked Mr. Cameron.

"Marques was one. He used to work for me. The other was a new man, Duran, or Doran, some one said was his name."

"Were they married?" queried Mr. Cameron.

"No."

"That is a blessing. Well, good night, McKay. I shall see Loring in the morning."

"Good night," answered McKay, and he added under his breath: "I think I 'd rather not be Loring in the morning. Too bad! Too bad!"

There was a light in Mr. Cameron's house. As her father tramped up the steps Jean threw open the door and came towards him. Her hair fell in waves over her dressing-gown. The candle in her hand threw its light into eyes which asked an anxious question from beneath their arching brows.

"Father, what is the matter?" Jean exclaimed, as Mr. Cameron advanced.

"There has been an accident at Number Three hoist," answered Mr. Cameron.

Jean drew a quick sharp breath. "Is Mr. Loring hurt?" she asked, bending forward to look into her father's face.

Mr. Cameron looked at her hard. Then a grim humor glinted in his eyes as he answered: "Loring hurt? Well — not — exactly."

Without a word Jean turned and led the way into the living-room, where the hastily lighted lamp flared high, leaving a smooch of smut on the chimney and casting bright reflections on the rough planks of the board wall. The girl walked calmly to the table and lowered the wick of the lamp. Then she tossed back the masses of her hair, and turning sharply to her father she uttered one word: "Well?"

"Well!" echoed Mr. Cameron, throwing himself into a chair by the fireplace. "Well! I should say that was a curious word to describe to-night's doings."

"What do you mean?"

"Mean? I mean that your Mr. Loring is a damned scoundrel."

"I do not believe it. You speak too harshly. You are angry."

"Hum! Perhaps."

Jean stood with downcast eyes. Suddenly

she raised them like a condemned man about to receive his sentence.

"What has he done?"

"He has murdered two Mexicans."

Jean shivered and drew the folds of her dressing gown closer about her. "Mr. Loring a murderer! Impossible!"

"Nothing is impossible to a man when he is drunk."

"Oh, he was drunk, was he? At the shaft, I suppose."

The note of relief in Jean's tone seemed to add the last touch to Mr. Cameron's exasperation.

"Do you think it was any excuse that Loring was drunk on duty with men's lives in his hands? You women have a queer code."

"No," observed Jean, "it is not an excuse. It is an explanation. That I can understand. The other I could not."

"Yes, and I can understand it, too. It means that I was a fool for trusting him. I should never have done it, never!"

Jean Cameron stole around to the back of her father's chair and leaned over till her face almost touched his. "Remember," she said

in a low tone, "if he has lost two lives, he saved one."

"Damn me! Am I likely to forget it?" Mr. Cameron answered, shaking off his daughter's hands which had been laid lightly on his shoulders. "Why else did I take him on as hoist engineer? It was paying a debt, so I thought. But I had no right to pay at other men's risk; and after all I had done for him he could not have the decency to keep sober on duty — well, it is too late to think of that now."

Jean turned away and twisted the curling ends of her hair slowly about her finger ends. "Tell me just what happened," she said unsteadily.

"It is a short story," her father answered gruffly. "Two men in the cage at the bottom of the mine signaled to raise — engineer, drunk, sets lever at top speed. If you cannot imagine what happened, you may take a lantern and go over yonder to see."

Jean sank shuddering on the window-seat and buried her head in the cushions. Her silence calmed her father's wrath as her speech had stirred it. "There, there!" Mr. Cameron said soothingly, as he walked across to the

window and stroked the bowed head. "It is nothing for you to be so downhearted about, my lass. You had nothing to do with it."

Still the girl lay motionless.

"Come, come, Jean! It is all over now for those poor fellows, and as for Loring, you will never see him again."

The figure on the window-seat stirred slightly, and from the pillows a muffled voice asked tremulously, "What will be done to him?"

"That depends," answered Mr. Cameron, "on whether the Mexicans decide on a demonstration between now and to-morrow morning."

"Oh!" cried Jean, suddenly sitting up and wheeling about with pale cheeks and flashing eyes, "they dare not. You would never allow it. Why are there no men guarding him? It is as bad as murder."

"Not quite," her father replied slowly. "Besides, if the Mexicans were drunk, you could not hold them responsible. That would be — what is it? — 'Not an excuse, but an explanation.' However, Loring is safe enough for to-night, and I promise you he will be far away by to-morrow."

With these words Mr. Cameron thrust his

hands into his pockets, and rising, strode up and down the room, the boards creaking under his slow tread. His daughter leaned against the window, staring out into the night.

"Oh!" she whispered, as if to some presence palpable though invisible, "how could you? How could you do it after what you promised me?" Then she turned her head and caught sight of her father's resolute back.

"He is rather a lovable person," she said, with a little catch in her voice. "Don't you think he will feel badly enough without much being said to him about — about the accident?" Her father laughed a short, uncompromising laugh.

CHAPTER IX

THE next morning Stephen awoke with a start, conscious that some one was standing beside his cot, as he lay fully dressed outside the blankets. Mr. Cameron was looking down upon him. When he struggled to his feet, Loring's mind was all confused. He ran his hand through his matted hair.

"Where am I?" he murmured.

Mr. Cameron's face was set decisively. It was easy to see from which parent Jean had inherited the modeling of the lower portion of her face.

"Come outside, Loring!" There was a chill incisiveness in the words which shocked Stephen into recollection. He followed Mr. Cameron out of the tent.

The bright, early morning sunlight made his hot eyeballs water, and he blinked uncomfortably. His knees shook from weakness so that he leaned against the fence beside his tent. Such absolute misery possessed him that he

could not think. His brain was numb. His mouth felt as if all the moisture had been baked out of it.

Mr. Cameron looked him over carefully and contemptuously, then fumbled in his waistcoat pocket, and produced a cigar. Eyeing Loring all the while, he slowly bit off the end, and lighted the cigar. Before he spoke, he took several deliberate puffs. It was a good cigar; but the rich smell of the fumes made Loring turn a shade whiter.

"Well, Loring, I suppose you know what this means for you?" began Mr. Cameron slowly. "A rather nice piece of work of yours, on the whole. Two men killed by your efficiency! I do not suppose that there is any use in asking you if you were drunk?" There was very little of the question in Mr. Cameron's voice.

Stephen gripped the fence hard, then shook his head.

"I do not like to dismiss you, Loring, for I am in your debt for saving my daughter's life." Judging from his expression as he said this, the thought of the debt did not greatly please Mr. Cameron.

Stephen looked out over the mountains. His eyes were glistening with moisture — and this time it was not caused by the glare. It cut him to the quick that the man who was so righteously dismissing him should be the father of the girl whom he loved. In a bitter moment there flashed before his mind the vision of all his broken resolutions, of his now useless plans for success. The whole fabric, which in the past months he had woven for himself, he suddenly saw torn to shreds.

Mr. Cameron's next words were lost to Stephen. It was some seconds before he could again focus his attention. When he caught up the thread, Mr. Cameron was saying: "I had hoped better things from you, Loring. I should have known better, that when a man is a drifter, such as you are, there is no hope. Still I had hoped! Well, I was wrong. Here is your pay check, for what is due to you. That is all."

Mr. Cameron turned and walked towards the office. Stephen stood looking dumbly after him, with the check fluttering loosely in his fingers. McKay, going by on his way to work, saw him, and came up to him. He held out his hand in sympathy.

"Damn it, Steve, I 'm sorry for you! You ain't worth a damn; but I like you."

Stephen looked at him in silence. His only conscious thought, as he gripped McKay's hand, was the mental reiteration· "I am worth a damn, I am worth a damn."

McKay went on in friendly solicitude: "Of course, it ain't none of my business, Steve, but if I was you I 'd beat it pretty quick. Just at present the friends of those men ain't losing any love on you. I think if I was in your boots the Dominion trail would look pretty good to me. It 's about up to you to *vamos*."

"I will go," said Loring. "It is n't that I fear what these Mexicans may do, because I don't care. But I can't stand it here. Good-bye, Mac! You have been a good friend to me. I know I deserved to be fired. Deserved a lot worse; but Mac," he added desperately, "I will make good somewhere!"

McKay almost imperceptibly shook his head, then smiled and again extended his hand.

"Well, anyhow, buck up, Steve! I 've got to get down to work now. Good-bye, and good luck!"

"Wait just a minute!" Loring called after him.

McKay turned, and Stephen held out his newly received pay check.

"Will you be kind enough to give this to Hankins up at the saloon, when you get time? I owe it to him, and to his partner."

"You certainly did do things up in great shape last night, Steve," said McKay, as he took the check, after Stephen had endorsed it with a shaking hand. "Got cheated, I suppose?"

"Rather," answered Loring.

"It is strange," thought McKay to himself, as he walked away, "with fellows like these saloon keepers. You could give them everything that you have, and no matter what happened they would keep it safely for you. But play cards and they 'll stick it into you for keeps."

Re-entering his tent, Stephen began to put his few belongings into a saddle-bag. His packing was not a long operation. He looked rather wistfully about the little tent, which had grown to seem to him almost a home. Then, slinging the bag over his shoulder, he started for the corral.

It was still very early, and few people were about. One or two of the Mexican teamsters were at the corral, sleepily kicking their horses into the traces. These looked at Stephen blackly, for in a mining camp news travels very fast.

Stephen's hands shook so that he had great difficulty in forcing the bit into the restive jaws of his pony. At last, however, "*Muy Bueno*" was saddled, and led out into the road. As Loring was putting up the corral bars again, a barefooted little Mexican girl came pattering past. Stephen had often befriended her in small ways, so now she greeted him with shy warmth.

"*Buenos dies, amigo!*" she chattered.

The little child's greeting started the tears to his eyes. Fumbling in his pocket, from among his few coins, he brought out a quarter. With a dismal attempt at a smile, he tossed it to her.

"Eh, Señorita Rosa, here is two bits for you, *dos reales*, buy candy with big pink stripes."

The child ran up to him and gratefully seized his hand with both of her grimy little paws. He cut short her repeated thanks with a quick "*No hay de que*," and swung into the saddle.

"*Á Dios*," he called to her. Then slowly he rode to the watering-trough. "*Muy Bueno*"

buried his nose deep in the cool water, and drank with great gulps. Stephen could feel the barrel of the pony swell beneath the cinch. When he could hold no more, "*Muy Bueno*" raised his head from the trough questioningly, the drops of water about the gray muzzle glistening in the sun. Stephen pressed the reins against the horse's neck, and turned him towards the Dominion trail, which showed as a ribbon of white upon the hills to the eastward.

Close behind him he heard a familiar voice singing an old song: "La, la, boom, boom. La, la, boom, boom." The last word was sung with unusual emphasis, serving as a salutation and hail.

Wah, beaming with his usual joyousness, was trotting towards him.

"Hey, me bludder, me bludder. You gettee canned! Oh, me bludder, you allee samee fool gettee drunk. You beat it to Dominion? Me bludder welly wise! La, la, boom, boom!" Wah concluded his outburst with a peal of laughter.

Stephen looked down solemnly at him.

"Damned funny, is n't it, Wah?"

"Oh, me bludder, me bludder!" — Wah

could get no further, before another paroxysm of laughter overcame him. Recovering somewhat, he produced from his blouse a greasy looking package.

"Me bludder get nothing to eat before he come to Dominion. Wah bring him pie, oh, lubbly, lubbly pie."

Stephen was deeply touched by the Chinaman's kindness. He shook his hand warmly.

"I had forgotten all about food. Good-bye, Wah, and thank you a lot."

"Oh, me bludder, wait one minnie moming. I have note. Missee Cameron, she send me bludder a note!"

Wah, with some labor, produced from his pocket a little envelope, and handed it to Loring.

"Oh, lubbly, lubbly note! Oh, lubbly —"

"Shut up, Wah!" flared Stephen. White as death, he took the note from Wah, and slipped it inside his shirt. He could not trust himself to read it.

"Please thank her, Wah, and —" He could say no more. Slowly he turned his horse, and rode towards the hills.

Wah walked away, murmuring beneath his

breath: "La, la, boom, boom, me poor bludder. He must habee hellee headache. La, la, boom, boom."

Stephen soon reached the place on the trail where was situated the old deserted "Q" ranch. A rusty iron tank by the shanty bore the crudely painted sign: "Water, Cattle 10 cts. per head. Horses 25 cts." Beside the tank, however, in what had evidently formerly been an empty bed, gushed a clear stream of water. Stephen smiled when he saw how nature had thwarted the primitive monopoly.

Dismounting, he lifted the saddle from his horse's back. Then he deftly hobbled him, and left him to eat what grass there was by the rocky stream bed, within a radius which he could cover with his fore legs tied together. Stephen then seated himself on the ground, propped the saddle behind his back, and proceeded to light a pipe, and to think. All the events of the past few hours had come upon him with such rapidity that he had had no time for reflection.

Seated there in the open, beneath the vivid blue sky, with no sound but that of the softly, coolly running water near, all the scene of the accident loomed clearly before him, far more

clearly than it had done in the morning when he had still been in the camp, and surrounded by the routine of life there. The very warmth of the sunlight, which should have made a man's heart bound with the joy of living, merely added to the blackness of his mood.

He was very nervous, and smoked with quick, hard puffs. Once his pony started at something. The sound brought Loring to his feet, all of a quiver. He sat down again, wiping the perspiration from his forehead with an excited gesture. Gripping his hands together hard, he thought the situation over and over. The more he thought of it, the worse it seemed. This was not a case which could be called the result of negligence, or drifting. It came very close to crime, and he knew it. Stephen Loring was a man who, when he sat in judgment upon himself, was unflinching. He weakened only when it came to carrying out the sentence which the court imposed. He thought of Miss Cameron, as she had been on the ride which they had taken together; then of what she must think of him now. This brought a flush of shame to his cheeks.

Suddenly he recalled the note which Wah had brought to him, and he took it reverently from

his blouse. It was the first time that he had ever seen her handwriting. His name was written upon the envelope in clear, decided letters, which coincided well with the character of the writer. Stephen looked at the writing, with an infinite tenderness softening the lines on his face. He started to tear open the envelope, then suddenly he stopped.

"I won't," he exclaimed, half aloud. "I will not read it until I am worthy to do so, or until I have a great need of it." Reluctantly he slid the note back into his blouse. Then, coloring, he pushed it over to his left side. His heart seemed to beat more strongly, more manfully, for the companionship.

He had eaten no breakfast, and began to be conscious of a great hunger. He ate, down to the last crust, the pie which Wah had given to him. It was as good as its maker had claimed it to be.

There is nothing in the world equal to food for restoring self-respect, and Stephen, having eaten, began to see the world more normally. Tightening his belt, he took a long drink from the stream, then saddled "*Muy Bueno*" and started again on his way.

All the afternoon he rode continually up hill, till towards five o'clock he struck the Dominion divide, and timber. The air here, in contrast to the valley below, was cold, and Loring, only thinly dressed, shivered. Several times cattle "outfits" passed him on the trail. Men were driving in from the range scraggly bunches of steers, to be fattened before selling. Once he did not pull his horse out of the trail in time, and sent a bunch of frightened cattle stampeding into the underbrush. He was so engrossed in his thoughts that he hardly noticed the cursing which he received from the ranchmen.

At dusk, beside the trail, he saw a bright fire in front of a tent. Two men, occupied in frying bacon, and boiling coffee, were seated before it. The smell that arose from the cooking appealed strongly to Stephen, and he reined in his horse.

"Howdy, stranger! Making for Dominion?" one of the men called out. "Well, you won't get there for some time yet. It is twelve miles from here. Better let us stake you to a meal. Come from Quentin, do you? Me and my pardner was going there to-morrow."

Stephen, with alacrity, accepted the proffered hospitality.

"Much obliged, friend," he said. "I 'm pretty well broke, and I was not expecting to get anything to eat to-night."

"Don't worry about that. You shan't go by our outfit hungry. We ain't made that way. There was a cuss I knowed once," continued one of Loring's hosts, "up in Cochise County. I was broke, flat busted, when I was there, and I asked him to stake me to a meal, and say, the mean skunk would n't come through at all. Said I could 'watch him eat.' Now what do you think of that?" As he recalled the crime against hospitality, the man kicked vigorously at one of the logs on the fire.

Loring listened, with due sympathy, to the tale, the while he eyed with hopeful glances the coffee-pot, at the edge of which a yellow foam soon appeared, serving as signal that the meal was ready.

"Sorry we can't give you flapjacks," remarked one of the men, as he lifted the bacon off the fire. "Pardner here makes swell ones, but we 're pretty low on our grub outfit now. Hope we can get work at Quentin. Any jobs floating round loose there?"

Stephen slowly filled his tin cup with coffee,

and paused, after the western fashion, to blow into it a spoonful of condensed milk, before he answered.

"I am not sure," he said, "but I think that there is a vacancy on one of the hoists. I think they fired a man there recently."

"That 's good for us," exclaimed one of the men. "Wish they 'd fire some more!" Stephen did not continue the discussion.

After a quiet smoke beside the embers of the fire, Stephen rose, and thanking his hosts warmly, prepared to leave. As he was mounting he happened to feel a flask that was in his pocket. He remembered vaguely having filled it the night before. Reaching down from the saddle he held out the flask.

"Have a drink, gentlemen?" he asked.

One of the men took the flask in his hands, almost reverently.

"I don't know that I won't," he said. He took a long pull, then handed the flask to his partner.

"Regards!" drawled the latter.

The words brought to Loring a bitter train of memories.

"Keep the damned stuff if you want it. I

am through with it," he said. Then, with a quick good night, he rode off.

The men, in mild wonder, looked after him for a moment. Then they relighted their pipes, and settled themselves by the fire.

"Mighty nice chap, that," remarked one, "but he must feel powerful bad about something to give away good whisky like that."

It was nearly nine o'clock in the evening when Stephen rode into Dominion. The main street was brightly lighted, and as it was Saturday night, the sidewalks were crowded with people walking restlessly up and down. The shop windows glowed attractively. Through several open doors he could see men gathered about pool tables. The bright lights by the cinematograph theater showed clearly the faces of the passing crowd.

Dominion had passed from the camp into the town stage, as was evinced by the liberal scattering of brick houses among those of wooden construction. Many horsemen were passing in the street. Fresh from the hills, Loring felt almost dazed by this renewed contact with established humanity.

His first care was to seek a stable for "*Muy*

Bueno." Seeing in one of the side streets a livery sign, he entered the place and tied his pony among the long line of horses in the shed. Then, after saying to the proprietor: "Hay and not oats," he walked out into the street.

"I hope the confounded expensive little beast won't order champagne for himself," he thought. "He is almost clever enough to do so."

As he walked slowly along, he mentally calculated his resources. Three dollars in cash. Nothing in credit. A few cents Mexican in prospect. He would have to sell the pony and saddle to complete the payment of his poker debt.

A group of men, thoroughly drunk, passed by, singing noisily. Idly, Stephen followed after them, until they came to the little creek that runs through the center of the town. Across the creek, high above the dark, silent water, lay a narrow swinging bridge. One of the group of men called out: "Let 's go across the bridge of sighs to Mowrie's." The others noisily assented and soon Loring could hear the bridge ahead of him creaking beneath their weight. He stood for a moment, hesitating, staring at the lights across the bridge, then he deliberately followed.

The opposite shore of the creek was lined

with "cribs" and shanties stretched in a long, sodden row along the bank. From many of them came the brazen notes of gramophones in a jarring discord of popular tunes. Women's voices were mixed with the music, in shrill unpleasant laughter. A board walk ran before the close built houses, and up and down this tramped throngs of men, talking noisily, singing, swearing. The faces of some group or other were now and then visible, as some one scratched a match to light a cigarette.

Women of almost every nationality on the globe stood in the doorways, French, Japanese, Negroes, Swedes, all dressed in flaunting kimonas. They called to the men in the crowd, exchanged jests, or leaned idly against the door-posts, staring fixedly into the faces of the men. From many of the places a bright light streamed out across the water. The shutters of several were drawn.

In strange contrast to the scene, in one of the houses some one was singing in a clear tenor voice, which sounded as sweet and pure as if it had been in a choir. For a moment the murmur of voices and tramp of feet ceased, as people paused to listen.

Stephen walked slowly down the street. A woman in one of the darker doorways called out to him. He stopped, bit his lip hard.

"Why not? What is the use, now?" he thought.

He ran up the steps and opened the door. Inside, half a dozen painted women were drinking with the men there. The proprietress beckoned to him to enter.

Then like a veil, before his eyes dropped a cloud of memory. He saw the shed at the hoist, two bodies laid limply on the ground; figures moving in dim lantern light.

He staggered out into the street, drew a deep breath and strode back across the bridge.

"I am through with this sort of thing for good," he muttered. "I owe the world too big a debt of reparation now. But I will pay it."

For the first time in his life, Loring's smile was a smile of power, that power which rises sometimes from a supreme sorrow, sometimes from supreme holiness, sometimes, as now, springing from the black soil of crime; but bespeaking the discipline which has learned to control passion, to bring desire to heel, and to make a man master of himself despite all the

devils that this world or the next can send against him.

He had learned his lesson at last, learned it at the cost of two lost lives, and the cost to himself of an overshadowing remorse which he could never escape, let the future hold what it would. But he had learned it.

CHAPTER X

AFTER three days of fruitless search for work, Stephen's outlook upon life grew very gloomy. Dominion was over-supplied with laborers. In looking backward, Stephen felt that he had applied for every sort of position from bank president to day laborer, but everywhere the answer had been the same: "Sorry, but we have nothing for you. We are even turning off our old workmen."

In the West, in time of prosperity, positions and opportunities of every sort go begging. In time of depression there is no harder place in which to get work.

To make matters worse, Stephen from principle had always refused to affiliate himself with one of the labor organizations, and in Dominion the power of the Union is paramount. Once he had almost persuaded the foreman at one of the smelters to put him on the rolls; but when the fact had appeared that he was a non-Union man the official had changed his mind.

"I can't risk it. It is all wrong; but if I was to hire you to-day, why to-morrow I would n't have three men working." This had been his final answer.

Shortly after this experience, Loring had been approached by a delegate who had tried to persuade him to join the Miners' Union. The delegate had enumerated the advantages, and they were many, — a sick benefit of ten dollars a week, friends wherever he should go, work at high wages, and a seventy-five dollar funeral when he died. The delegate had asked Stephen if it were fair that when the Union, by concerted action, had brought about the prevailing high scale of wages, outsiders should both share the advantage, and yet weaken the Union position by working contrary to the fixed scale. At the end, as a peroration, the man had cited the possibilities of crushing capital at the polls, arguing with the general point of view of such men, that the chief aim of capital was to crush labor.

"You need n't pay your dues until you get your first month's wages," he had concluded.

Stephen had begun to feel that perhaps his anti-Union convictions had been prejudiced, for

the man had clearly shown many good arguments. Then the delegate, seeing that Stephen was weakening, had thought to clinch the matter. Changing his manner, he had shaken his finger in Loring's face and said: "If you don't join the Union, we 'll see to it that you don't get a job in the territory. We 'll send your picture to every camp in Arizona, and life will be hell for you. There was a man only last week who would n't join. He is in the hospital now, and, by Gawd, he will stay there for a while."

"That settles it," Loring had answered.

The man had become all smiles again.

"I thought you would see it that way," he had rejoined.

"I think that you misunderstand me," had been Stephen's reply. "I would not join your Union if you hired me to do so. As a matter of fact, the Miners' Union here is not a true labor union. It is a thugs' Union, and the sooner all honest workingmen find it out, the better for the cause of Unionism throughout the country."

The scuffle that had ensued had resulted in Loring's favor, but it had not helped him to find work.

One morning, rather from want of occupation than from any definite expectations, Stephen took his place in the post-office at the general delivery window. He was greatly surprised when, in answer to his inquiry, the clerk slipped a letter through the grating. It bore the Quentin postmark; but the writing was unfamiliar. Stephen walked across the room, and leaning in the doorway opened the letter with curiosity. It was from Mr. Cameron, and ran in this fashion:

"QUENTIN, September 20th.

"STEPHEN LORING.

"DEAR SIR: I suppose that you realize how final your actions here must be in regard to any trust being placed in you. I shall say no more upon the subject. The fact remains that unfortunately I am in your debt."

Stephen read this sentence over several times before continuing:

"I feel bound to make one more effort to repay you, which must be regarded as final. I have interests in several companies in Montana, and I will offer you a position with one of them, on the understanding that you will never come into my way again or — "

here several words were scratched out

"You must realize how unpleasant it is for my daughter to be under any obligation to a man, who, to put the

matter plainly, is a worthless drunkard. In offering this position to you, I may as well say that this is the only motive which actuates me. The position is one in which no responsibility is involved, being merely clerical. The pay would be sufficient to maintain you as long as you remain steady. The condition I impose would be absolute.

"Yours truly,

"DONALD H. CAMERON."

Stephen noticed with interest the character of the signature.

"I don't believe that man ever failed at anything," he thought. "There is only one thing that he never learned, and that is how to deal with a failure."

It was the noon hour, and the various whistles told of lunch, for some. Stephen read the letter over and over.

"Why not accept the offer?" he questioned. Mr. Cameron could certainly feel no more disrespect for him than he did now, and the blatant fact that he was hungry and without work forced itself upon his attention.

"It means another chance," he muttered, and now that he was sure of himself, he knew that a chance meant success. He thrust the letter into his pocket.

"Hang it, I 'll take him up," he thought. "I have been everything else; I may as well be a grafter."

As he slid his hand out of his coat pocket, he felt another envelope. He pulled it out, and looked longingly at it. It was Jean's note. He hesitated, then tore it open.

"I need it now, if ever I shall," he said to himself. There was only a line, signed with Jean's initials.

"*I still believe in you.*"

Stephen read it with bowed head. His shoulders shook. The paper danced up and down before his eyes. Over and over he read the note. Unconsciously he stretched out his hand, as if to press in gratitude and devotion the hand of some one before him. At length, with a start, he came to himself. He returned the note to his pocket, and in a determined fashion walked up to a man who was standing near him.

"I would like to borrow two cents for a stamp," he said.

The stranger roared with laughter.

"Well, you are broke! Say, friend, I 'll stake you to a meal, if you 're that hard up."

Stephen shook his head: "No, thank you. I have still my coat, which I can pawn; but I am much obliged for the stamp."

He found an odd envelope lying on a table. Going over to the desk, he addressed this to Mr. Cameron. Then taking from the waste basket a sheet of paper, he wrote quickly upon it five words:

"I 'm damned if I will."

He put on the stamp with a hard pound of his fist, and threw the letter into the mail-box. Then, with his heart beating joyously, he walked out of the post-office. Inside his coat a note lay warm against his heart.

On the corner stood a pawnbroker's shop. The brightness of the gilding upon the three balls showed that it was a successful one. The place was crowded with men who were disposing of everything that duty, a mild sense of decency, or necessity did not for the moment require. Loring entered the shop, and elbowing his way to the desk, laid down his coat. The proprietor picked it up, prodded the cloth with his thumb-nail, shook his head over the worn lining, then said:

"Two bits on that."

Stephen silently took the proffered quarter, and went out.

"That means one meal, anyhow," he thought.

A gaudy sign attracted his attention: "Chinese-American Restaurant" — "All you can eat for two bits."

"I think that they do not lose much on their sign," he reflected when, a few minutes later, seated at a counter, he gnawed at some bread and stew, and drank bitter coffee. "Any man who ate more than a quarter's worth would die."

Having eaten, he sauntered over to the cashier's window and nonchalantly slid his quarter across the counter. Then no longer a capitalist, but also no longer hungry, he stepped out into the street again. He looked to right and left wondering in what direction to turn his footsteps. The sight of a crowd in front of the post-office determined him. He questioned a man on the outskirts of the group, and found that the excitement was caused by a telegram, the contents of which was posted in the window. Working his way through the crowd, Loring reached a position whence he

could make out the notice. The telegram was from the governor of Sonora, the Mexican province which lay just across the line from Dominion.

"Outbreak of Yaquis. No troops near. Would deeply appreciate help from Dominion."

The crowd was laughing and cheering.

"Me for Old Mexico!" called one.

"Perhaps we'll all be generals," shouted another.

The news had spread like wild-fire, and from every direction appeared groups of men, armed with Winchesters, shotguns, or Colts. All were rushing toward the Southern Pacific station. Stephen hurried up the street to a gun store, and by dint of hard persuasion obtained from the proprietor an old Spencer forty-five calibre, single shot carbine.

"It will at least make a noise," thought Loring. He joined a group of men who were on their way to the train.

"I might as well go to Mexico as anywhere," he reflected. "My responsibilities are not heavy just at present."

Within half an hour after the receipt of the

telegram in Dominion, three hundred men, all armed to the teeth, were at the station. For in a region where the sheriff's posse is one of the regular forms of entertainment, there are many men who joyously start upon an expedition of this kind.

A cheer arose from the crowd when Harry Benson, at one time the captain of the "Arizona Rangers," appeared upon the scene, clearing a way for himself by the adept fashion in which he spat tobacco juice.

"Going along, Harry? Good boy," some one called. "You ought to have brought all the Rangers with you."

"See here," answered Benson, "this ain't in no wise official business. This is sort of a pleasure excursion." There was a howl of laughter at this, then as the engine whistle blew sharply, all scampered for places in the "special" which the railway company had provided.

A man who was on the front platform of one of the cars began to sing a song — a very popular song, of which the verse and chorus were unprintable, but very singable. With men hanging out of the windows, standing on the roofs

of the cars, and with platforms and steps jammed, the train pulled out of the station, headed for the Mexican Line, only fifteen miles away.

Half an hour brought them to the border. Here were waiting the governor of Sonora and many Mexicans, who cheered excitedly as the train drew into the station. Benson, by unanimous consent, was acting as director-general of warfare. As the train slowed down, he jumped to the platform. A Mexican official resplendent in uniform and gold braid, in strange contrast to the motley throng following at Benson's heels, stepped forward to greet him. Benson sang out cheerfully: "Hello, here we are; what is there for us to do?"

While the official was explaining the situation, he looked a bit anxiously at the crowd, hoping that when the trouble was over, they would all depart from the province of Sonora with the same celerity with which they had come. It certainly was a hard-looking aggregation.

The Governor talked earnestly with Benson, speaking excellent English. "I do not know what to do. According to the laws, no armed force can enter our territory. It is a bad prece-

dent. And yet we need help. There are no troops near Los Andes where the raiders are feared. Yet the laws are very strict, and as an officer of the law I must not let them be broken. The law says plainly: 'No armed force.' What shall I do?" The Governor was in despair over the situation.

Benson saved the day.

"Look here, Gov," he said. "I used to be an officer of the law myself. A man must conform strictly to the laws; I know all about it. But," he added, with a wink, "we 're here, just sort of a disorganized party as happened to meet on the train. We was all going hunting near Los Andes, and we sort of came over without formalities."

The Governor's face beamed with happiness at this solution.

"It is *magnifico!* And as the custom-house cannot appraise so many weapons at once, you are permitted to carry them, gentlemen. In bond, of course, in bond," he added hastily.

"Yesterday we had news from the hills that the Yaquis were raiding again," he said to Benson. "Two prospectors were killed, not fifty miles from Los Andes. A bridge on the

main line is down. The troops cannot be there for twenty-four hours."

Benson nodded comprehendingly. "Same old trouble, ain't it? I wonder these Yaquis would n't get tired. We 'll fix them up good for you if they come."

These formalities of international law having been settled, all again boarded the train, and a slow hour's run toward the west brought them to Los Andes.

The inhabitants of this sleepy little town of Old Mexico thronged about the station and welcomed their prospective rescuers with enthusiasm. Loud cries of "*Vivan Los Americanos!*" echoed from end to end of the platform, as the men swarmed out of the train.

Soon the men were assigned to quarters in the various houses and shops. The plaza before the cathedral in the center of the town became, for probably the first time in its existence, a scene of activity.

As Benson was completing the disposition of his men, a Mexican ranch owner rode up to him.

"The Señor is the *comandante?*" he asked in broken English.

"Sure, Mike, *Seguro Miguel*—Fire away!" answered Benson.

The ranchman looked puzzled, then commenced to explain his errand. His ranch, it appeared, was situated some twenty miles outside the town, in the direction from which the Yaquis were expected, and his ranchmen were all absent upon the range. He asked for five or six men to defend his *hacienda*.

Benson waved his hand airily, in feeble imitation of the Mexican's grand manner: "*'Sta 'ueno*, you shall have them."

Turning, he saw Loring, who had been listening to the talk. Benson was accustomed to judging men quickly, and he was rarely deceived. A quick survey of Loring's face satisfied him.

"He is no quitter, anyhow," he thought, "and at present his moral character don't matter." He called to Loring: "Say, you Mr. What 's-your-name, you get four other men and go with this chap to his ranch!"

"Have you *caballos* for them here?" Benson asked the ranchman.

"Sí, sí, I can procure them at once," exclaimed Señor Hernandez. "And my gratitude, it is eternal."

"Never mind that," said Benson, turning away.

A very short while sufficed for Stephen to find four volunteers to accompany them, and within an hour the little party was riding out of the town to the southward, where lay the ranch and the threatened pass. The country was desolation itself, rocky ground covered with layers of dust and sand. All was gray in color. The little clusters of sage-brush, all dried and lifeless in the heat, made no change in the gray hue. The road was merely a track across the desert, beaten by chance horsemen or cattle. Along this the horses scuffled, sending up clouds of alkali dust into the air for the benefit of the riders who were behind.

Stephen rode beside Señor Hernandez, speaking only in short sentences, to answer or ask some question. The leather of the saddles, beneath the sun, was burning hot.

After four hours of riding, just as the sun was beginning to drop behind the foothills, they saw before them in the desert a large patch of green, as vivid as if painted upon the ground, fresh and succulent, amidst the desolation of the plain.

"My alfalfa crop!" exclaimed the Señor, pointing with pride. "We have irrigated. Much water. Big crop. *He aqui la casa* — there, behind the alfalfa."

Stephen saw rise, as if by magic, a long one-story structure of adobe, so much the color of the earth as to have been till now almost indistinguishable. Beside the house was a large brush corral. So perfectly was all blended with the landscape, that not until they were very near did Loring appreciate the great size of the building.

At the corral they dismounted and unsaddled.

"Better carry the saddles up to the house!" said Loring to the men, who had hung them over the corral bars. So, carrying their guns and saddles, they all walked up to the house.

Here they were received by the ranchman's wife, a striking Spanish beauty.

"It is Señora Hernandez," said the Mexican, with justifiable pride. The Señora showed the men the rooms where they were to sleep. Stephen, as commander, was given the largest room.

Pepita was very well pleased with the appearance of the defender whom her husband

had selected, for in spite of his flannel shirt and dusty boots, Loring was not bad to look upon.

In a few moments, Stephen re-entered the main room. The Señora was there, leaning against one of the casements. The scarf that was thrown over her head added to her charms, and lent a subtlety to her dark beauty. As Stephen walked across the room toward her, he admired her greatly.

"By George! She is a beauty," he exclaimed under his breath. Then answered a voice within him: "Yes, but at thirty, she will be fat, oh, very fat."

As the Señora turned to greet him, the first voice made answer: "Yes, but it will be at least twelve years before she is thirty."

CHAPTER XI

WHILE Stephen was talking with the Señora, a gong in an inner room clanged.

"It is the time for our evening meal, Señor," she said, with a pretty little Spanish accent. After Loring had perjured his soul by swearing that he was loath to change his occupation for the pleasure of eating, she smiled at him mockingly, and led the way into the dining-room.

The Hernandez ranch was the largest in the Los Andes region, and the house was furnished and decorated in an elaborate manner. The walls of the dining-room were hung with gay pictures, and the table, set for supper, boasted several pieces of silver.

Señor Hernandez presided at the table with true Latin hospitality, and Stephen, his previous protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, did full justice to the excellent fare, at the same time keeping up a lively conversation with the Señora. The men with him ate vigorously, the only break in their steady eating

being caused by glances at the pretty Mexican girl who served the meal.

After supper, Stephen and the Señor went outside, and walked about the ranch, studying the possibilities of defense in case of trouble. At Stephen's suggestion, they led the horses from the corral, and picketed them behind the house, as the first thought of any marauders would undoubtedly be to raid the corral.

Like most adobe houses, the ranch house consisted of a main building, with two wings running at right angles, thus enclosing three sides of a court. All the windows of the ground floor had iron shutters, fastening on the inside. The ground about the building was as flat as a board, and was broken only by the lines of the irrigation ditches which ran amidst the alfalfa fields.

"If we station a man to watch upon the roof," said Stephen, as they returned to the house, "it will be all the precaution that we need to take. On a clear night such as this, a man can see far in every direction."

"It will be well," answered the Señor. "And this door here, it is a heavy one. It will be hard to break down."

"I don't believe that it will come to that," laughed Stephen. "I don't believe that we shall have any trouble at all."

"I pray not," answered Señor Hernandez. His was not a nature which was exhilarated by prospective danger.

When they re-entered the main room, Stephen glanced quickly from the Señora to her husband.

"It is strange," he said to himself, "how a little swarthy man like that could have won such a beauty for a wife. I suppose, though, that if she really loves him, she does not care if his ears are a bit like an elephant's, his eyes too close together, and his nose as thin as a razor." The husband of a pretty woman is not likely to have his charms exaggerated by other men.

They spent the evening smoking and talking. The Señora rolled cigarettes with the greatest deftness, and the smile with which she administered the final little pat did much to enchance the taste of the tobacco.

At ten o'clock the Señora rose, and after calling the servant to light the men to their rooms, bade them good night.

It had been agreed that Stephen should stand

the first watch. He insisted that the Señor, tired as he was from two sleepless nights of worry, should not share his vigil.

Having exchanged his carbine for one of his host's Winchesters, Loring mounted the ladder that ran from the hallway of the second story to the roof. It was a perfect night. The heavens were glittering with stars, and all was silent. Not a breath of air came from across the desert to cool the copings, which were still warm from the day's heat.

Stephen leaned his rifle against the chimney, then felt in his pockets for a little sack of coarse "Ricorte" which some one in the town had given to him. He filled his pipe carefully, packing the tobacco down with his forefinger, till all was even; then striking a match, he held it far from him, until the blue flame of the sulphur burned to a clear yellow. He held the match to his pipe until the bowl glowed in an even circle of fire, and the smoke drew through the stem in rich, full clouds. Then, picking up his rifle again, he began a careful lookout over the plain towards the pass.

A fact which greatly facilitates the building of air castles, is that, unlike most buildings,

they need no foundations. The castles which Stephen built that night, as he paced up and down the roof, biting hard on his pipe-stem, would have done credit to a very good school of architecture. The general design may be imagined from the fact that time and time again he drew from his pocket a little crumpled envelope, and holding it close to the glow of his pipe, read and reread it. Once he carried it to his lips, and with a feeling almost as of sacrilege, kissed it. Then he turned sharply, for on the roof behind him he heard light footsteps and the tinkle of a woman's laughter.

"Oh, but Señor Loring is a faithful lover," exclaimed Pepita, stepping toward him.

Even in the darkness, Stephen felt himself blushing up to his hair. He stammered, then laughed: "I plead guilty, but I am not generally like that."

"It does no harm," she murmured softly. "And the Señorita, does she also care so much?"

"Not in the least," answered Stephen. "The Señorita does not even know that I care."

"Oh, you think so? Women are not so — how do you say — ? so blind," laughed the

Señora. "But you have not asked me why I am here, Señor."

"No," answered Stephen rather bluntly. In the light of his reveries of the past hour he felt rather ashamed of the little flirtation that he had carried on after dinner with the Señora.

"You need not be embarrassed," she went on, laughing at his stiffness. "It was not to see the gallant Señor that I came, though no doubt there are many who —"

Loring silenced her with an imploring gesture.

"No, I came to see if all were well. I was afraid that I heard noises," she confessed.

"All right, so far," said Stephen. "I do not think that we shall have any trouble."

"Then I will again go down," she said.

Stephen walked with her over to the ladder, and bowing low over her hand, whispered a low "*Buenas noches!*" As he helped her to the ladder, he looked into her eyes rather curiously. He could not understand their expression.

When she had her foot upon the uppermost rung, she said good night to him. Then, as he turned, she said, half shyly: "The letter,

Señor; you will watch the *carta* of the Señorita well?"

Laughing softly, yet not altogether gaily, she ran down the ladder.

"My husband, he is good," she reflected. "Ah, very good, but he is as homely as a — monkey."

Wiping two little tears from the corners of her eyes, she stepped quickly back into her room.

The time passed very slowly for Stephen. The clock in the courtyard below struck two. His rifle barrel began to feel cold in his fingers, as he fought against sleep. The night had grown thicker, and he could no longer see far out into the distance.

"It will be morning soon," he thought. "I don't believe that the Yaquis mean business this time."

Even as he spoke, his ear caught a low sound. Then there was a silence. Doubtingly, he leaned far out over the wall, and listened intently. Again he heard the sound; again it ceased. Then once more it arose and became continuous, — very soft, but insistent, a solid, dull, irregular thud, as of many hoofs beating

upon soft ground. The blood in Stephen's face boiled with quivering excitement. The hoof-beats came nearer and nearer, then stopped. The next sound that he heard was a grating click by the corral, as of some one slipping down the bars. He thought with lightning rapidity: "A shot will be the best way to awaken the men."

Almost instantly afterwards he saw against the gray-white of the opposite side of the court a shadow, then another and another. Kneeling behind the coping, he covered the leader with his rifle.

The click of the action as he cocked his Winchester sounded to him preternaturally loud. He dropped the muzzle of his rifle a fraction of an inch until the first shadow drifted across the sights. He fired, and the shadow dropped. The flash of his rifle was answered from the dark by a dozen spurts of flame. All around him the bullets whined, or clicked against the dry adobe, sending great chips flying in all directions. Three times Loring fired, lying with the butt of his rifle cuddled close against his cheek. Would the men below never hear!

As the vague shapes rushed across the court for the door with a shrill yell, five knife-like jets of flame shot from the windows, and the reports echoed staccato in answer to the fusillade from the courtyard. The leaders of the Yaquis had almost reached the shelter of the doorway, but the angle windows fairly spat fire as the defenders emptied their repeaters. Unable to face the withering fire the raiders wavered, then fell back to the line of the irrigation ditches, whence they sent a rain of bullets against the windows of the houses. The tinkle of breaking glass on all sides was mingled with the reports of the rifles. The surprise had been complete for the Yaquis, as they had expected to find the ranch unprotected.

As soon as this first attack was repulsed, Stephen ran to the ladder and jumped down to join the others. His rifle barrel was burning hot from the rapidity of his fire.

He found the men all gathered in one room. It was a strange looking group which the flashes of the rifles revealed in the smoky air, half dressed, kneeling by the shutters, shooting viciously out into the darkness, at the blurred things in the ditches. A bullet whistled by

Stephen's ear as he entered the room, and with a dull spat buried itself in the plaster behind him.

"Easy on the cartridges, boys!" he called. "They may rush again." His advice was well called for, as in their excitement the men were firing wildly.

"It is lucky that there are no windows in the back of the house," he exclaimed to Señor Hernandez.

The latter was engaged in trying to make himself an inconspicuous target.

There was the sound of footsteps at the door of the room and a blinding glare of light, as Pepita entered, carrying a large lamp. Stephen snatched it from her and hurled it out the window through the splintered panes. But its work had been done. One of the men by the window sobbed, staggered to his feet, and leaned out into the night, shaking his fist towards the ditches. Then he fell face downward across the ledge, where for an instant he was silhouetted by the last flicker of the lamp below. Loring flung himself upon him and dragged him back into the room, but not before the body was riddled with bullets. Stephen felt the sting of

several as they grazed his clothes, by some miracle leaving him unhurt.

"*Dios!*" gasped the woman.

"Lie down!" shouted Loring, forcing her to the floor. Then he took the dead man's place by the shutter, and began to fire methodically.

Encouraged by their success, the Yaquis again swarmed forward. The whiplike crack of five Winchesters checked them before they were within the courtyard.

The black of the night began to turn to gray-blue with the hint of dawn. The figures in the ditches stirred, and as they began to run for their ponies, the defenders fired into them with telling effect. Then, in contrast to the previous rattle of shots, came the sound of the hoofs of a hundred ponies, scampering back up the trail.

"All over!" called out Stephen. Rising from his knees, he leaned out of the casement, and sent one more shot towards the flying Yaquis. It brought no response.

They carried Haskins, the man who had been shot, into the next room, and laid him on the bed. He was quite dead. The Señora

followed, sobbing. Wildly she turned to Stephen as he tried to comfort her.

"You, Señor — you do not know what it is to kill, by madness, by folly."

"Not know? — I — not know?" Stephen smiled a smile that was not good to see, as he broke off.

"Good God!" he thought, "had it left no trace on him, that haunting vision of two corpses flung twisted and out of shape on the wreckage of timber, those two things that had been men sent out of life by his guilty hand? Had it not lived with him by night and refused to be put aside by day? Had they not risen up in the dark hours and called him by a name from which he shrank like a blow, and now this woman told him he could not know what it meant to kill a man!"

He put his hands in his pockets, bowed his head, and walked slowly back into the other room.

The light breaking fast in the eastern sky, showed a disheveled scene. Mattresses were scattered on the floor, the bedding was thrown about the room, all of the windows were smashed. By each casement was a pile of empty brass

cartridge shells. By one window was a mess of something red. The air was stale, and filled with acid-tasting powder smoke.

Loring went downstairs, and slipping back the bolts on the heavy door, stepped out into the cool of the early morning. Outside everything seemed in strange order, compared with the scene that he had left. He started on a tour of investigation about the ranch. The ditches amidst the alfalfa showed no trace of the death-dealing occupants of an hour before. As he walked around the corner of an outbuilding, he stumbled over a body which the Yaquis had overlooked in their flight. The Indian's stiff, square shoes lay with their toes unbending in the dust. The blue denim of the overalls and the buckle of the suspenders showed the trade-mark of a Chicago firm! A bullet hole was clean through the middle of the swarthy, bronze-colored forehead. Even through the rough clothing, the flat, rangey build of the man was evident. The hair, falling forward in the dust, was coarse and black.

"Poor devil!" thought Stephen. "He has ridden on his last raid."

He walked quietly away from the body, and

went back to the house. "Everything is all right," he reported.

Soon the stove was lighted, and coffee boiling. The men were laughing and telling stories. The Señor strode up and down, twisting his little spikes of mustachios, and exclaiming upon the valor of the defense.

When they sat down to breakfast, there was a seat too many at the table. Loring thought of the silent form in the room above, and for a moment felt weak. Then, shaking off his depression, he entered into the general hilarity. Time after time, the servant passed the great platter of dry *tortillas*. The big cakes tasted delicious to the tired men.

As they finished breakfast, the sound of a bugle call sent every one to the window. Outside was a troop of Mexican cavalry, hot on the trail of the Yaquis. Señor Hernandez invited the officers to enter, and while he pressed whisky upon them, gave a voluble account of the fight. He spoke in such rapid Spanish that Stephen could understand little; but from the frequent sweeping gestures, he judged that the story lost nothing in the telling.

The officers remained but a short while, then

remounted, and rode at a sharp trot towards the hills.

"I wonder that the government does not send enough troops to wipe out these fellows. These cavalry will only drive them back into the hills, and in a few months they will again swoop down upon the outlying towns and ranches, just as they have been doing for the past ten years," thought Stephen.

After breakfast, Loring prepared to return to Los Andes. The others had accepted the invitation of Señor Hernandez to stay for a few days as his guests. A spirit of restlessness pervaded Stephen, and prevented him from remaining.

The Señor was to arrange to send home Haskins's body.

"He came from Trinidad, he always said. Guess he had folks there," one of the men had volunteered.

Just as Loring was mounting, Pepita ran forward, and whispered something to him.

He shook his head in reply.

"Try and see!" was her rejoinder.

The thought which she had put into his head made the long ride back to Los Andes pass very quickly.

The town had resumed its normal appearance. The loafers were again stretched upon the steps of the little stores or on the pavements. Those who were not rolling cigarettes were comfortably asleep.

"*Los Americanos vamos,*" was the answer to Stephen's inquiries.

After leaving his borrowed horse at a stable, he wandered idly towards the plaza. Now that the reaction had come, he felt very tired. Spying a bench beneath some palm trees, he stretched himself upon it, and in the security of him who has nothing, dozed peacefully.

A mosquito, buzzing vapidly about his head, caused him to exert himself to the extent of a few useless blows. A wagon, rumbling down the street, caused him to look up. Then after these two exhibitions of energy, he fell soundly asleep.

CHAPTER XII

TOWARDS ten o'clock in the evening Stephen directed his steps to the railroad station, and seating himself on a side-tracked flat car, kicked his heels over the edge, and smoked his last pipeful of tobacco. He jangled some keys in his pocket, pretending to himself that they were money. It was bad enough, he reflected, to be "broke" in the States, where he could talk the language; but here — He looked disconsolately at the throng of Mexicans who were on the platform. "*Buenos dies*, and *que hora?* although I am sure I pronounce them well, will not take me very far in the world," he thought. "It does not matter much where I go; but I certainly must go somewhere. I will board the first freight train that appears, whether it is going north, south, east or west."

Having come to this determination, he jumped down from the car, and walking over to the bulletin board, ran his finger down the time-table.

"Nine o'clock — train for La Punta. Well, that's gone. Hello! Here we are — eleven P. M. express for the City of Mexico. I wonder what that asterisk means. Oh, yes, Pullmans only. That would be infinitely more pleasant than the brake-beams of a freight," he mused, "and for me it would be equally cheap."

Stephen was a novice at the art of "beating it," but he possessed two very valuable assets, a keen observation and a vivid imagination. Having thus resolved to travel in state, he returned to his flat car, and set about planning ways and means. A few minutes of solemn thought gave him his first conclusion: that at this time of year the southbound trains would not be running full.

"Therefore there will be many vacant berths," he thought.

A few more puffs upon his pipe gave him the next link in his plan. "Whether empty, or full, the Pullman company has all the berths down."

Thought number three: "At night they make long runs, without stopping. Therefore," thought Stephen, "once on board, and safely tucked in an upper berth, I can travel until

morning without being discovered and thrown off the train."

"Now comes the second part of my problem: how to get on the train and into my berth without being discovered." He shut his eyes, and visualized a train standing at the station. "Where would the porters stand?" he asked himself.

He thought hard, and remembered that at night the porters generally stand at opposite ends of their cars, so that every alternate set of steps is unguarded.

"Now," he reflected, "if the berths are down, the curtains will be drawn, therefore there will be little light from the car windows, to bring me into prominence, and the passengers will probably be asleep. All will go well, if the vestibule doors are not locked. But generally on hot nights they are unlocked. Anyhow, I must risk it."

As he mused over his plan giving it the final touches, the express for the City of Mexico thundered into the station.

With a grating of brakes, and a squish of steam, the heavy train sobbed itself to a stop, the engine dropping from the fire-box a stream

of glowing coals between the gleaming steel rails, and blowing forth steam from the exhaust.

"Here 's my train," thought Loring. "It looks very comfortable."

He slipped his pipe into his pocket, and stepping back into a shadowy corner, awaited his opportunity.

From the platform arose an irregular murmur of voices, such as always attends the arrival of a train at night. That murmur which, to the passengers lying half awake, sounds so far away, and unreal! He heard the bang and thump of trunks being thrown out of the baggage car. A party of tourists, weighted down with hand-luggage, hurried by him. Even as he thought, the white-jacketed porters stood with their little steps alternately at the right and left ends of their respective cars, so that in the long train there were three unguarded platforms.

A man was rapidly testing and oiling the car wheels. His torch flared yellow-red against the greasy brown of the trucks, and made queer shadows dance on the red varnished surface of the cars.

Stephen tried to make out the name of the car nearest to him. The first four gilt letters

showed clearly in the torchlight: "ELDO" — The man with the torch moved nearer. "EL-DORADO," spelled Stephen. "Perhaps the name is a delicate hint to me from Fate."

The inspector passed on up the train, hitting ringing blows on the wheels with his short, heavy mallet. He tested the last car, then stepped back from the train, swinging his torch around his head as a signal to the engineer.

"It must be now or never," thought Loring. But which platform to try! At that instant, from the car opposite him, came a great puff of white steam, for a moment almost obscuring the steps from view.

Loring darted forward, and jumped upon the train platform. Anxiously he thrust his shoulder against the vestibule door. It was unlocked. As he gained the vestibule, the car couplings tightened with a jerk, and the train clumsily started. He took a hasty glance down the interior of the car. At the opposite end the porter was closing the vestibule door. The aisle was clear.

Stephen stepped quickly into the car, pulled back the curtain of the nearest section, and stepping on the lower berth, caught hold of

the curtain bar, and with one pull swung himself up. In the process, he inadvertently stepped on the fat man in the lower berth. Stephen knew that he was fat, because he felt that way. The man swore sleepily, and twitched the curtain back into place.

"I think that I won't put my boots out to be cleaned to-night," said Loring to himself. "It would be tactless." Then he pulled the blankets up over him, rolled over close to the far side of the berth, and fell asleep, lulled by the hum of the car wheels, pounding southward fifty miles an hour.

Tired out by his vigil of the night before, Stephen slept until it was late. He awoke with a start to find that it was broad daylight. Sleepily he tried to think where he was. His eye fell on the dome of polished mahogany above him, upon the swaying green curtain, and the swinging bellrope. Then he recalled the situation. For a few moments he lay back, blissfully comfortable. His weary muscles were grateful for the rest. Then he roused himself, and peered cautiously out from between the curtains. While he was looking up and down the dusty stretch of carpet in the aisle, the colored porter

rapped hard on the woodwork of the lower berth, and proceeded to awake the occupant.

"Last call for breakfast, number twelve, last call; half-past nine, sir, half-past nine."

Stephen curbed a childlike desire to reach over and pull the kinky hair of the darky.

"I am sure that he would think that I was a ghost," he laughed to himself.

He could hear the man below him turn over heavily, then grunt, and begin to dress.

"I think I also had better arise," reflected Loring. He watched the porter until the latter was at the far end of the car, then dropping his feet over the edge of the berth he slid out onto the swaying floor, almost into the arms of the amazed Pullman conductor, who at that instant had entered the car.

"Where did you get on?" gasped the brass-buttoned official. "I did n't know that there was an 'upper' taken in this car."

"At Los Andes," answered Stephen, "I was rather tired, so I thought I would not bother you at the time."

The conductor looked hard at Stephen, and took in at a glance his ragged clothes, dirty shoes, and flannel shirt; then he grinned.

"That was mighty considerate of you, stranger; now let 's have your ticket. We have almost reached our next stop."

Stephen pretended to feel in his pockets, though he well knew that it was useless. The other people in the train were beginning to stare.

"To be put off a train would be far pleasanter in imagination than in reality," flashed across Stephen's mind.

"Hurry up, now," repeated the conductor. "Where is your ticket?"

"I have n't any," Loring blurted out.

"Come on, now, no nonsense! fork up!" insisted the conductor.

"I would gladly, if I had any money," rejoined Stephen, then with seeming irrevelancy, he added: "How far is it from here to the 'City'?"

"It is about seven hundred miles," answered the conductor, "but I am sure you will find it a delightful walk."

"Last call for breakfast in the dining-car. Last call," again echoed through the car.

"Better hurry, sir," said the porter, not realizing the situation, as he passed Stephen.

"Thank you," said Loring, with a grim smile. "But I think I will refrain from eating this morning."

A rather heavy faced man, who was sitting near by, laughed audibly. Stephen became the center of interest for the passengers. For them, the little scene was a perfect bonanza, serving to break the monotony of the trip. Loring was conscious of the stare of many eyes, about as effectually concealed behind books and magazines as is an ostrich with its head in the sand.

"Come out into the vestibule with me!" said the conductor, rather gruffly. Stephen followed him in silence. When they were on the platform, the conductor turned and looked at him squarely. Loring noticed that there could be kind lines about the close-set jaw.

"See here," began the former, "you don't look to me like a man who is often working this sort of game. I guess you must be sort of up against it, ain't you?"

Stephen bowed his head slowly, in non-committal agreement.

"Now I don't like to see a man down and out," went on the conductor, "unless he is the

kind that deserves to be, and you ain't. Besides, you 're from the States like I am, and so, though I 'd lose my job if it were found out, the company is going to set you up to this ride free."

Stephen's face lighted with gratitude, as he grasped the man's hand, and thanked him.

"When did you have anything to eat last?" asked the conductor suddenly."

"Not since yesterday morning," answered Stephen.

"Well, you go right into that car" (he pointed forward with his thumb) "and eat. I 'll make it all right with the dining-car people."

"That is too much," said Loring. "I can't" —

The conductor cut him short. "Some time when you have the money, you can pay me back. If you don't ever have it, don't worry. No, you must n't thank me any more. It is just that you are an American, and I don't like to see a fellow from the States up against it in this Godforsaken land."

As Loring walked through the train, his blood tingled with the pride of race and citizenship, tingled with the glow that comes or should come

to every man, when he realizes the strength of the great brotherhood to which he belongs: realizes that when things are stripped to their elemental facts, and the veneer of international courtesy and friendliness removed, he is standing shoulder to shoulder with his countrymen against the world.

When at last the train drew into the "City," Stephen said a warm good-bye to his benefactor, then followed the line of passengers out into the street. With no definite purpose in mind, he wandered up and down the city, staring idly into the shop windows. By accident, he found himself in a great plaza. He was pleased with the gaiety.

"If it were not for economic distress, I should be very well off," he thought. "I must get work somewhere, and immediately."

He walked up one of the side streets, looking at all the signs, hoping that one might give him a clew. For a long time he saw nothing helpful, and he was on the brink of discouragement, when his eye was attracted by a large gilt unibrella on the next corner, hung out over the street. Beneath it was a Spanish sign to the effect that umbrellas could be bought, sold, or

repaired within. In the window was a large placard: "We speak English."

"If I were skilful with my hands," thought Loring, "I might get a job repairing here; but I am not skilful with my hands."

He stood reflecting, his hands deep in his pockets. An idea soon came to him, for he had always been more resourceful than successful.

He walked boldly into the shop, and approached the proprietor. The man began to assume the smile with which he welcomed prospective buyers, noticed Loring's clothes, and checking the smile, waited in silence for him to speak. Stephen, unabashed, smiled in a most friendly fashion, and a few words of comment upon the admirable situation of the shop, and the excellence of the stock, quite won the owner's confidence. After a few moments of conversation, in a guile-free manner he asked: "And do you do much repairing here?"

"No," the proprietor admitted, "very little. Most of my business is to buy and sell."

"It seems strange that in a big city such as this there should be no demand for repairs?"

Stephen made the statement a question by the rising inflection. He spoke with the hesitating assurance which had made so many people trust him.

The proprietor shook his head in answer: "No, there is no demand."

"Is it not that people do not think, perhaps, do not know of your place?"

"Very likely you are right," answered the storekeeper. He was pleased by the stranger's interest in his business.

Then Loring played his high card.

"Suppose that you had an active English-speaking agent, who would go to the offices and homes of the American and English colony, and collect umbrellas to be repaired, then would not your business flourish?"

The shop owner grasped the plan, but not with both hands.

"Y-e-s," he answered slowly. In dealing with an American he felt that he must be on his guard.

"Well," continued Stephen, "I am such a man, very efficient (Heaven help me!) and reliable (It won't!). For a commission, no pay in advance, but for a commission of say ten

cents for each umbrella, I will collect for you." The umbrella man consented half reluctantly. The matter was soon arranged, and Loring hastened forth upon his rounds.

By six o'clock, after many strange experiences, and rebuffs, he had managed to collect ten umbrellas. Gaudy red, somber black, two green ones, and one white. All were in advanced stages of decrepitude. He had pleaded with the owners to let them be restored, as if each umbrella had an "inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

With his odd collection bundled under his arms, Loring started on his return to the store. Greatly pleased with the success of his scheme, he strolled along talking to himself, and not noticing where he was going.

Walking in the opposite direction to Loring on the same sidewalk was another man. His quick, decisive steps and the slightly deprecating glance which he cast at any thing of beauty in the windows of the shops that he passed proclaimed him an American. The expression on his face varied from amusement to scorn as he glanced at things that were different from those in the States. There was in his whole

manner that good-humored toleration of the best achievements of another nation that marks the travelling American. The sidewalk was narrow, and the heavy shoulders of this man overshadowed half the distance across. He was covering a good yard at a stride, which was all the more remarkable as the most of his height was above the waist. Had he been a girl, his hair would have been called auburn where it showed beneath his hat. Being a man, it may be truthfully said that it matched the bricks of the building he was passing. His eyes, which were as round as the portholes of a ship, betokened a degree of honesty and kindness which matched well with the general effect of strength and homeliness given by his whole appearance. The energy of all his motions was a sharp contrast to Loring's lazy stroll. At the second that he reached Loring, his eyes were uplifted in wondering curiosity at the bright colors of the roof tiles. His preoccupation, combined with Loring's absorption, made a collision inevitable. And the inevitable, as usual, took place.

"I beg your pard—" began Stephen, raising his eyes.

"Stephen Loring!" exclaimed the stranger. "Where in the devil did you come from?"

"Baird Radlett!" called Stephen, as if stupefied.

They shook hands warmly. Radlett was an old friend of Stephen's, one who had been an intimate in the days before Loring's misfortunes.

"Come on, Steve, we 'll go and get a drink," said Radlett.

Loring shook his head. "Not for me, thanks," he answered.

"Phew!" whistled Radlett. "Since when?" he involuntarily exclaimed. Then for the first time he took notice of the strange load which Loring was carrying.

"What on earth, Steve?" he asked, pointing to the umbrellas.

In the old days Loring had been well off, Radlett rich, and it hurt Stephen to explain his abject poverty. He hesitated a moment, then unblushingly replied:

"Why you see, Baird, I am on a sort of house-party here, and the weather being fine, I thought that I would take all the girls' umbrellas around to be fixed."

Radlett stared in amazement, then both broke

into shouts of laughter, as the ridiculousness of the excuse struck them simultaneously.

"See here, Steve, I know that you are in hard luck. Come down to my hotel with me, and we will talk things over," said Radlett. Putting his arm affectionately through Loring's, he dragged him, protesting, along with him. As they walked, Stephen explained the matter of the umbrellas, while Radlett listened amused, but a bit saddened.

"To think of dear old Steve Loring reduced to peddling umbrellas!" he said to himself.

On their way, they came to the gilt sign of the umbrellas.

"I must leave these here," said Loring.

Radlett tactfully waited outside, while Stephen entered and deposited the results of his collection. The proprietor, who, when released from Stephen's winning conversation, had begun to feel rather worried, was surprised and delighted at the success of the mission. He opened the cash drawer, and handed to Stephen a silver dollar. Stephen wrote down the addresses of the umbrella owners, then with his new earned dollar clinking lovingly against the keys in his pocket, he rejoined Radlett.

They walked briskly to the hotel where Radlett was staying, and stepping into the smoking room, were soon comfortably ensconced in two big leather armchairs, placed in an out-of-the-way corner of the room.

CHAPTER XIII

RADLETT pounded upon the nickel bell on the smoking table, and ordered two cigars. Stephen bit the end of his cigar hastily, while Radlett produced a clipper from his pocket, and carefully cut the end of his. These unconscious actions portrayed well the differences in their characters. Drawing a match from the white earthenware holder, Baird scratched it on the rough surface, and then held the light to Stephen's cigar.

"Mine is lighted, thank you, Baird," said Loring, and through blue circles of smoke he watched Radlett light his own cigar.

"I had almost forgotten what a stocky old brute Baird was," he mused. "I do not think, though, that I could ever forget that dear old face. Of all the faces that I ever knew his is the homeliest, and the kindest! If he poked that long jaw of his out at me, and looked at me with those honest eyes, he might tell me that

black was white, and I should fight the man who said that it was not true."

Radlett also utilized those first moments of silence brought about by a good cigar, an old friend, and a comfortable chair, to make a few observations of his own.

"In five years, Steve has changed a great deal," he thought. "Five years of failure, and drifting, such as I judge these to have been, leave their mark on any man, definitely and indefinitely. Imagine Loring, the fastidious, in those clothes five years ago! And then the old frank manner has become a bit hesitant. He seems always on the defensive. Poor old chap, he must have had some pretty hard blows. The old light in his eyes is no longer there; but after all he has that same quality of winning appeal, of humor and of latent strength, which nothing can obliterate, which always has made and always will make every one who knows him hope for the best, and pardon the worst." At the conclusion of his reflections, Baird's eyes were damp.

Stephen smoked slowly, as one would sip a rare old wine. Then, taking the cigar from his mouth, he held it before his eyes, twirling

the label slowly around, and looking at it appreciatively.

"It is eleven months since I smoked a good cigar, Baird; perhaps you can guess how this one tastes to me," said Loring softly, almost as if talking to himself. Then he relapsed again into silence.

Radlett puffed vigorously on his cigar, then said: "Steve, it is your own fault that you are not smoking good cigars all the time."

"Perhaps it is," answered Loring; "but the fact remains, and eleven months is a long time out of one's life to lose such happiness."

"The last time that I heard of you, you were in Chicago," remarked Radlett. "Some one told me that you had a good position there. What happened to you?"

"Fired," was the laconic answer.

"Did you deserve to be?"

"Yes."

One of the things that Loring's friends held dearest in him was the fact that he never shirked the truth in the matter of his delinquencies. His own word on the matter was final. In the old days Loring's deficiencies had been among his most charming attributes. Peo-

ple had always spoken hopefully of "When he buckles down." Now the "When he will," had become "Now that he has not," and his deficiencies were not so charming.

Radlett smoked on imperturbably. When he again spoke, his voice was thick with smoke.

"What was your last position?"

"Hoist engineer, Quentin Mining Company."

Again the query: "Why did you leave?"

"Fired," repeated Stephen, flushing savagely. Then looking Radlett in the eyes, he added: "I was drunk, and through my fault two men were killed."

Leaning forward, Radlett laid his hand on Loring's shoulder, and gripped it tightly with his strong fingers.

"Steve, old man, I am sorry for you. I know what this must mean to you. You were always the most kind-hearted fellow on earth, and I can see how this has crushed and saddened you. I 'm — I 'm damned sorry — but, Steve, you needed it. It will be the making of you, Steve. We have all been wanting to help you, and we could not; you would not let us. You have lost almost everything in the world, — your money, your position, your family. You

have lost prize after prize which you might have won; and all these things have not held you. You still had that quality of drifting. You used to think, — I remember well how we used to talk it over, — that love would hold a man. It won't. If you have tried it, you know" — Loring breathed hard — "if you have not, then you have been spared one more blow. You never had, or could have had, religion; I don't know what that might have done for you." Radlett was speaking fast now, and though he struck hard, Loring never flinched.

"You always knew that you were hurting yourself by what you did; but that did not check you," went on Radlett. "You had, I remember, a creed of ethics in which, so you said, you logically believed. You know how much good that has done you.

"Steve, I am as sorry for you as if you were myself — yes, sorrier." In the intensity of their grasp, his fingers almost crushed Loring's shoulder. "I know what it seems to you, the feeling of guilt, and of remorse; but you deserved it and you needed it. The one thing that could have stopped your drifting was to find that your destiny and actions are inex-

tricably tangled with those of other men. Now that you have learned that by drifting you may sink other ships, you won't drift. I know you, Steve, and I swear it. This has been your salvation." Radlett stopped short, and sank back into his chair.

Stephen sat looking sternly into the smoke. There were deep lines beneath his eyes, showing dark against his pallor, for so great was the tumult within him that even through his heavy tan his face showed white. When he spoke it was as a man who opens his mouth, and does not know whether the words that he speaks are loud or soft.

"You are right, Baird. I was wrong, and Baird, I 've thrown over everything in the world that I cared about. There was a girl, Baird; you were right about that, too. She believed in me, even though she did not care. I cared for her more than for anything that I have ever dreamed of in the world. She was everything to me, Baird, and I promised her that I would make good. I broke my word. It was the only thing that I had not broken before. Well, my love for her did not check me.

"But since that — that — murder," he spoke

now from deep in his chest, "I have gripped myself; I have found myself. I am going to work up again, Baird. I can, — I am on the up grade. I am sure of it. It is a hard struggle, but the fight of it makes it all the more worth while. It will be hard, and it will take time; but I can do it."

Radlett stared out of the window for a few moments, as though deeply absorbed in watching a passing carriage. Letting his eyes travel back to Loring, he asked: "Did you ever hear of the Kay mine? I think that it was situated near where you were last working."

Stephen nodded. He was relieved at the change from the tenseness of the conversation, and a little ashamed of the emotion which he had shown. "Yes," he answered, "it was only fifteen or twenty miles from Quentin. An English syndicate bought it some time ago. They brought out polo ponies, dog-carts, and heaven knows what besides, to gladden their hearts while in exile. I rode there only a few weeks ago, and looked over the place. The mine has been shut down for a year. It is a wonder that they were ever able to open it in the first place, with all the nonsense that they had. A man

whom I saw there told me that the English managers had spent two days in arguing where to put the 'baths in the houses of the tenantry.' I hear that the mine has just been sold again."

Radlett grinned from ear to ear at the thought of the effect on the community of a remark about the "tenantry."

"Still," went on Loring," almost everybody says that it is a very rich property, and would have paid well if it had only been worked properly. The indications were very good for a big vein."

Radlett beat a tattoo with his fingers on the arms of his chair.

"I have just bought the mine," he said.

Stephen looked at him in surprise.

"I thought," he said, "that you were only interested in railroads."

"That is true; but this is a sort of 'flyer.' I had the chance to buy the property very cheaply, and the expert whom I sent to look at it reported it as good, if it were properly managed. I must get as manager a man whom I can absolutely trust, as I shall have no time to supervise the work personally. Stephen, will you take the position?"

Loring sat up straight in his chair.

"I am not the man for the place," he said; "I know very little about mining, and besides—"

"Leave out the 'besides'," answered Radlett. "That is over with. I would trust you now as soon as any man living. As for the knowledge of mining, you will not require any. There is a good mine foreman there who can attend to that. What I want is a man to organize and run the plant, to make it a paying producer. It needs a man who understands men, more than a man who understands mining. The ore is there. The men to get the ore will be there; but there must be a head for the whole system. You know, better than I do, that a new mine means a new community to be governed. It needs a man who will see that for every copper cent that goes into the ground, two copper cents come out, a man who will see that the machinery which is ordered arrives on time. It needs a man who will pick the right subordinates and will give them pride in their work. It needs a man who will get the labor, and keep it there. That is what I want you for, Steve. You can do the work. Now will you?"

Two voices seemed to whisper in Loring.

One was of pride, the other was of pride in himself. The voice of pride whispered: "He is your friend, and is offering this to you from charity." The other voice, aggressive and self-reliant, whispered: "You can do the work well. It needs a *man*, and you are capable of doing it."

"Baird," he said brokenly, "I will. I can't thank you; it is far too big a chance to be acknowledged by mere thanks. But I will do my best for you, and if I fail, it will be because I am not a big enough man, and not because I have not tried."

"The thanks will be from me to you, when the Kay is the biggest producer in Pinal County," responded Radlett. "If you do your best, it will be the best that can be done. Don't think that it is from friendship that I offer you this. I always keep friendship and business apart, and I am offering this to you because you are the man that I need." Radlett took a large leather covered note-book from his pocket.

"Here are the details of the proposition," he said, and for almost an hour he read aloud a list of figures and estimates. Loring listened, keenly alert, and questioned and criticised with

an insight which surprised Radlett, who several times looked up in approval at some suggestion. When he had finished, he closed the book, and said: "The acting manager will start you on your work. The mine was opened last week, but everything there is still at sixes and sevens. When do you think that you can start north?"

"I will take the eleven o'clock train to-night," answered Stephen, decidedly, "only—"

"By the way," said Baird, in a matter of fact manner, "you had better draw your first month's salary in advance. There will be a great many things that you need to get." He wrote a check and gave it to Loring. "They will cash this for us at the office. I shall telegraph to-night to the mine, telling them to expect you; also to the company in Tucson, telling them to honor your drafts."

Radlett rose and looked at his watch. "It is eight o'clock and I am as hungry as a bear, and," he added, with a twinkle in his eyes, "if you can leave that house-party of yours, where the girls have such charming umbrellas, we might dine together before you start."

They entered the dining-room, where the orchestra was playing gaily, and settled them-

selves at a table glowingly lighted with candles under softened shades.

"Does n't this seem like old times, Steve?" said Radlett, while he carved the big planked steak which they had ordered. Throughout the meal, time and again the phrase: "Do you remember?" was repeated, recalling hosts of memories, both sad and gay. The intimacy between Radlett and Loring had been of such depth and woven with so many bonds that the years in which they had been separated made no difference in their complete companionship. They were not forced to fall back on the past on account of lack of sympathy and mutual interest in the present, as is so often the case; but rather they looked backward as one might open a much loved book, the interest of which increases as the covers wear out, and in which the delight is intensified when some congenial soul has shared its moods, and its laughter. Through all the conversation, Radlett, with an inborn tact unexpected in a man whose manner was so bluff, skilfully recalled Stephen's successes, and dwelt upon them in an endeavor to raise that self-confidence in Loring which had been shaken to its core. Stephen's failures were

recalled by Stephen himself, whose recollection of them was undimmed though his perspective on them had changed. So quickly did the time pass that it was with a start that they both heard the clock in the hall outside strike ten, in a deliberate, impersonal fashion. In answer to a question from Radlett, Loring shook his head.

"No, I have no preparations to make. If the city with no history is happy, then certainly the person with no possessions to bother him should be content."

So they smoked in quiet companionship until it was time to leave for the station. Baird saw Loring on board the train, and they parted after a silent, firm handshake, which gave strength to one and conviction to the other.

CHAPTER XIV

IN six months after Loring had taken charge, the Kay mine was producing on a paying basis. What those six months had accomplished was little short of marvelous. At the time of the arrival of the new manager, everything had been in an extreme state of disorganization. Unused machinery stood uncovered and rusting. The pumps were hardly more than holding the water in the shafts. No new timbering had been put in place to supplant the old, which was dangerously rotten. The costly electric lighting plant had been almost ruined by neglect. Discord had been reigning between the various heads of departments, and discord in a community in which there is no recreation, and from which there is no way of escape, is a dangerous element.

When Loring had assumed control, in explanation of failures each worker had murmured complaints of others. At the mess there had been gloomy silence, in contrast to the

joviality which had prevailed at the old mess in Quentin. Distrusted and disliked, Loring had firmly pursued his course until that course was justified, and the criticism and hatred had turned to respect and admiration. He had worked night and day, attending to everything himself. Loring was tireless in his enthusiasm, and he had inspired the men under him to do their work better than they knew how. The result was that by this time, the system of a well-built machine had supplanted the previous chaos. And though it was far from a perfect machine, each day was adding to its efficiency.

The nervous irritability of the mess had been relieved by the arrival of an old friend. One day Hop Wah had drifted into Stephen's office and after announcing solemnly: "Me canned, too," had stood waiting expectantly until Loring had ordered him installed as assistant cook in the company eating-house. Within a week after this the meals had become joyous occasions. Wah would dance from man to man as he served the meals, murmuring insults which pleased even the insulted, and provoked roars of laughter at the victim's expense. When he had some particularly bold insult to

deliver, he would sing it from the kitchen window. The singing lent impersonality and the distance safety. Soon the refrain and interlude of his old song, "La, la, boom, boom," were as well known, and as popular in Kay, as they had been in Quentin.

Radlett had told Loring that there would be much work for him to do, and he had not been guilty of exaggeration. Night after night the electric light beneath the green tin reflector in the office had burned until well into the morning. Then a watcher might have seen it go out suddenly, before a tired man turned the key in the office door.

The increase of efficiency in the work at the Kay mine was due to one thing, — the ceaseless vigilance of Stephen Loring, and the outward circumstances were only the manifestation of the changed conditions within himself. One who had known Loring, the failure, would scarcely have recognized Loring, the success. The chin line no longer drooped, his smile showed honest pride in the goodness of his work, his movements were alert, his head thrown back. His skin was ruddy and his eyes clear, yet the marks about his mouth showed traces

of the struggle through which he had passed, and there were new lines of care lying in furrows across his forehead. He had aged under responsibility, and something of the old, lazy charm which had endeared him to his friends was gone; but a stranger looking at him would have appreciated at once that here was a man of force, one who meant to be master, and who was fitted to be.

It is possible that the change in his dress contributed as much as the more subtle developments, for Loring, in his blue suit, soft white shirt, and well-oiled tan boots, was a very different looking man from the shabbily clothed wanderer who had sought work last year in Phœnix.

On one autumn afternoon Stephen sat at the desk in his office, engaged in dictating a report to the directors of the Company. Above the rattle and click of the typewriter his voice rose and fell monotonously: "The construction work alone is behind. Within the workings three new stopes have been opened since last report, at positions marked on the enclosed print. The ore in these has been running high, averaging" — (he paused and glanced at the

assayers' report lying on the table beside him) "averaging twelve per cent copper. If the contact vein continues to run in its present direction, the ore from the new stopes which we are opening may be reached cheaply by means of winzes from the three hundred foot level." Loring verified this carefully from the foreman's report, then nodded to the stenographer to proceed. "The cost of production has been reduced five per cent in the last month. If the present favorable prices for the coke continue, I hope to reduce this still more. I enclose for the first time a detailed statement of expense distributed per department, made possible by the new system of bookkeeping which has been adopted." Here he paused. "That is all for the present," he said.

Then he picked up the construction report and with a frown reread it. "That is bad work," he murmured. "With all the men whom Fitz had under him, he should have done better, and accomplished more."

"Oh, Reade!" he called to the stenographer who had gone into the back room, "come back here! I have something to add to that report."

The stenographer came in, and again took his place before the typewriter.

"Owing to the slowness of the work on the exterior construction, I have found it necessary to dispense with the services of Mr. Fitz."

Reade looked up in surprise. "Are you going to 'can' him?"

Stephen made no answer, but continued to dictate: "I have secured the services of a very good man, who until recently has been at the head of that work in the Quentin Mining Company and who, I think, will fill the position very satisfactorily." "That is all, Reade."

The stenographer left the room, whistling softly. "He sure acts with precision," murmured Reade, as he closed the door. "When Fitz answered back at mess the other night, I knew he'd get into trouble. The Boss never speaks twice, and now that the men understand his ways, he don't need to."

A short half-hour after Loring had finished his letter the stage from the northward drew up outside the office door, and a passenger descended from it. Loring opened the window, looked out, and recognized his old friend McKay.

"Prompt as usual!" thought Loring. "I did not expect him until to-morrow or the day

after; but I like his coming so soon. Promptness means efficiency."

Loring smiled when he heard McKay tell the driver to charge the trip to the Company. "Mac has not much to learn of business methods in the west," Loring chuckled, as he hastened to resume his seat at the desk. A little later he heard a thump, as McKay dropped his bag on the porch, and then he heard him asking for the manager. Some one directed the stranger to the office, and Loring heard the creak of his boots on the stairs.

Stephen, for he had a streak of vanity in his nature, lighted a cigar, and pretended to be very busy over some papers. After a moment he looked up, to find McKay staring in such open-mouthed astonishment that it seemed as if his teeth were in danger of falling back down his throat.

"Well, I 'll be damned!" he finally ejaculated. "What are *you* doing here?"

"I am the manager," said Stephen in a dignified manner. Then he could keep a sober face no longer, and burst into a laugh, in which McKay, though in a dazed and uncertain manner, joined.

Stephen jumped up from his chair and shook hands with his old boss. McKay continued to swing his arm up and down, as though this grip were his one hold upon the world of realities.

"You! How on earth did it happen? You must have been a heap wiser than I thought!" exclaimed McKay.

The only danger of being thought wise is that one is tempted to prove it; but Stephen safely avoided this danger.

"Anyhow, Mac," he answered, "here I am and here I hope I'll remain, and there is a lot of work for you to do here. Things have been allowed to deteriorate to such an extent that it takes more time to rebuild than it must have taken to construct the whole plant. Fortunately we have the original plans designed by the people who had opened the mine, and though they are no key to what has been done, they give a pretty good idea of what was meant to be done." As he spoke he pulled a roll of blue prints out from the desk drawer, and drawing up a chair beside him for McKay, he started to outline the work.

As he watched the unerring way in which

McKay's clumsily shaped finger followed the designs, stopping at each questionable point and rubbing back and forth over it with the determined questioning of a hand competent to remedy defects, Loring thanked heaven for the fact that the Quentin Company, their rush of early work over, had parted with such a man. The very twitching of the corners of McKay's mustache, as he pored over the papers, showed a personality teeming with success and energy. After an hour of hard work Stephen pushed back his chair from the desk and rolled up the prints.

"I 'm afraid, Mac," he said, "that you are going to be very busy here. You see I know how good a man you are. But I also realize that after your journey you must eat, and that you will want to see your quarters."

He called Reade into the room and introduced him. "Take Mr. McKay and show him where he is to live. Put him in that new shack on the right-hand side of the road." With a sudden recollection of McKay's treatment of him on that first night at Quentin, Stephen went on with a broad grin: "To-night I will send you over some blankets. You can pay

for them out of your first month's pay, and to-morrow I will let you have an old straw hat of mine."

McKay smiled sheepishly, as he stood twirling his rusty black felt hat in his fingers. Accustomed as he was to the sudden changes which Arizona brings about in men's fortunes, Loring's meteoric rise was too great a problem for him to solve. He could not adjust himself to the miraculous change which had been wrought in the life of the man before him. He could only stand speechless and gaze at the marvel, and then drop his eyes again to the baggy knees of his best trousers.

Stephen took pity on him in his bewilderment and interrupted his reflections: "If you can start in to work after lunch, I will have Mr. Fitz, the man who is leaving, show you what little he has done. You had better take a microscope to see it with."

McKay followed Reade out of the office, his efficient, right-angled and non-complex mind in a whirl.

"*Steve Loring*, manager of the Kay mine! I certainly will be damned. *Him* running all this!" He gazed stupefied at the ordered con-

fusion of the busy camp before him. "*Steve Loring!* Phew!"

And all the time the man of whom McKay was thinking with admiring envy sat before his desk, his head sunk upon his folded arms in an attitude of profound dejection.

To McKay, Loring seemed to have reached the highest level of the up grade in being the manager of a successful mine. What more could any man wish? But to Loring all that he had achieved was as nothing.

The sight of McKay had brought back with photographic vividness all the familiar things and scenes of the old days at Quentin, — the smelter, the dip in the hills, the hoist, "*Muy Bueno,*" and then, in spite of himself, above them all rose the face of Jean Cameron, Jean as she had looked bending over his cot in the hospital with the sheaf of flowers across her arm, Jean smiling at him as she passed the hoist, Jean stretching out her hand to him on that never-to-be-forgotten ride through the soft Arizona night.

With a sudden pang he realized that all success would be as dust and ashes unless he could bring it to her and say: "Whatever I have won,

it was all for you. My only pride is that whether you ever know it or not, I have at last justified your faith in me. Oh, Jean," he murmured, "it is not success or power or money that I want. It is you, dear, you, you, you!"

CHAPTER XV

AT four o'clock that afternoon, since it was Saturday, the men were paid off for the week. No pay day will ever be satisfactory to the recipients until that happy state of affairs is reached when each man himself decides on the amount which is due him. Even then there will be some who will leave the pay-window with the discontented feeling that they have cheated themselves.

The bookkeeper, from his grated window, gave out the pay checks to the line of Mexican laborers who, displaying their brass number tags, passed before him. He kept up a running fire of argument. Over and over he was obliged to explain the amounts of the checks.

"The mess bill comes out of you."

"You had twenty dollars' worth of coupons at the store."

"No, you only worked five days this week."

"Hospital fee is twenty-five cents."

These were fair samples of the innumerable

arguments which he was compelled to go through with every week. And in spite of all explanations, the poor miners would walk away from the window, looking with dejected, unbelieving eyes at the small figures of their checks. Men of this class can never realize that if out of wages of ninety dollars a month they spend seventy-five for food and store coupons, the balance due to them is not ninety dollars, but fifteen.

As usual on pay day afternoon, in the road before the office, little groups of men were arguing excitedly among themselves, discussing the manner in which they were "cheated." The dejected droop of their shoulders was accentuated by the quick, jerky movements of their arms as they gesticulated.

Knowlton, the deputy sheriff, who was assigned to Kay, sat on the steps before the office door. He was rolling a cigarette, seemingly unconscious of the noisy crowd. But pay day was always likely to cause trouble, and he was prepared for it.

The group of excited men augmented fast, as little knots of miners were paid off, and found awaiting them a willing audience of their

"No one quite dared to lead an attack upon Knowlton, who stood his ground beside the body." *Page 241*

grievances. A word will fire a crowd of this kind as quickly as a fuse will set off a charge of giant powder.

Knowlton watched them closely, out of the corner of his eye. He saw one of the leaders in the discussion stoop down and pick up a large rock.

"Hey, Rigas! Drop that, quick!" he shouted.

For answer the rock crashed through the glass of the office window.

Knowlton waded into the midst of the crowd, and seized Rigas by the collar, almost hurling him off his feet. His rough tactics generally overawed his prisoners, but Rigas had been drinking, and fought. The crowd began to close in.

Knowlton dropped his hand to the point where the suspenders joined his belt and whipped out his "automatic." Raising it in the air, he swung it down with all his strength upon Rigas's head. There was a stunning report, and the miner lay upon the ground, with a hole two inches wide through his forehead. The crowd, muttering angry curses, drew back. No one quite dared to lead

an attack upon Knowlton, who stood his ground beside the body, his still smoking gun in his hand. The camp doctor came up on the run, having heard the sound of the report. Kneeling beside the body, he gave short and incisive directions.

"Valrigo, Peres, Gonzales, and Escallerra; you four carry him over to the hospital!"

The four men whom he had designated bent over and clumsily raised the inanimate body.

"No, no," said the doctor, "don't let his head hang back. Here, Valencella! Come and hold up his head. That is right. Now slowly with him, boys; easy, don't jolt him!"

The doctor walked beside the bearers, his hand on Rigas's heart, which for a wonder was still beating. Behind them fell in a sullen, straggling, pushing procession of the other men, watching the blood drip from Rigas's head.

Then Knowlton turned, and walked slowly into the office. As he entered, the volume of curses changed from a mutter to a roar. He found Loring on his knees, locking the combination of the safe.

"Well, Mr. Loring, I 've done it now. I 've killed Rigas. These damned automatics! You

can beat a man over the head for a week with a Colt without its going off."

"Too bad!" said Stephen calmly, rising from his knees. "But the character of Rigas was not such that he will be a great loss to the world. He was always causing some sort of mischief."

"It ain't Rigas that I am worrying about," said the deputy. "It 's the rest of them."

"How long can you hold them in check?" asked Stephen.

"If they were sober, I could hold them until hell froze, but they have just been paid off, and by night they will all be drunk. Then there will be trouble. It has been brewin' for a week. Some agitator chap has been talking it up to them about the way the Company was stealing from them. I don't jest know what we had better do," he concluded, while he fingered his gun nervously, and looked to Loring for guidance.

"Rigas is dead, you said?" asked Stephen.

"Well, not exactly. He might as well be, though. A forty-five calibre hole through your head ain't healthy. If he ain't dead now, he won't live more than a few hours. And when he does die —!" Knowlton broke off gloomily.

"What are you going to do about it, Mr. Loring?"

"We can only wait," answered Loring. "We must not let them see that we are anxious."

"Ain't you going to do *nothing?*" Knowlton looked at Loring in perfect amazement.

Stephen smiled, and shook his head. "No, I am going to supper. I would advise you to eat at the mess to-night, instead of at your shack. I am afraid that at present you are not exactly popular."

He walked off towards the eating-house, while Knowlton stood looking after him blankly.

"He don't realize that in about three hours after those men get to drinking, the Kay mine won't exist. If we had a real man in charge here, we might do something about it. He thinks, I suppose, that because the men like him there won't be trouble. Hell! and I used to think he had sense!" Knowlton almost snorted in his rage.

At supper every man was keyed to a high pitch of excitement. There were only about twenty white men in camp, and though they were well armed, the Mexicans outnumbered them more than fifteen to one. Stephen alone

refrained from joining in the flurry of question and conjecture which whirled about the table. Although he seemed unmoved, a close observer would have noticed that he gripped his knife and fork almost as if they had been weapons. Wah slid his plate of soup before him, at the same time patting him on the shoulder with affectionate interest.

"Me bludder like one owl," he said.

"Hey, Wah, this soup is rotten!". called a young fellow from the end of the table.

"Oh, lubbly, lubbly soup!" chanted Wah. "Lubbly, me bludder, lubbly."

"I 'm not your bludder, Wah," answered the man politely. "I would rather have an ape for a brother than you."

"You me bludder, allee samee, allee samee." Saying which, Wah disappeared into the kitchen, only to stick his head a moment later through the connecting window, and call: "Oh, you pig-faced Swede, Oh, you pig-faced Swede! La, la, boom, boom!"

But even Wah was unable to break the tension that surrounded the supper. As the men were lighting their pipes at the close of the meal, from the gulch behind the camp where were

the saloons, came the sound of a fusillade of shots and a burst of shrill yelling.

"The game is on," thought Loring.

As the noise outside became louder, Stephen said to the men: "I want all you fellows to get your guns and go over into the office to guard the safe. Go as quietly as you can so as not to stir things up. Keep quiet in there and don't shoot unless you are compelled to. We have just issued some new stock, and if there is news of any fighting here the value will go all to pieces. We must just wait, and keep quiet. Remember a fight means almost ruin, and we have got to avoid it."

Knowlton looked quickly over to McKay, and nodded. Both were experienced men, and they knew that now was no time to think of stock values, but of actually saving the mine, and the lives of the white men there. They knew that serious trouble was intended, as since the shooting, every outlet of the camp had been guarded by Mexicans. They knew that the only chance, not for avoiding a fight, but for avoiding a massacre, lay in an immediate attack on the Mexicans, before they were completely out of hand. And Loring was thinking

of stock values! Still, they remembered that he was inexperienced, and they set down to indecision what seemed like criminal folly. As for McKay, he had known Loring to fall once before, and he was not hopeful for the outcome.

"Knowlton," continued Loring, "you had better stay here with me. It won't do for the miners to think that you are hidden."

"Well, I won't be," exclaimed Knowlton decisively. "There is only one thing in this world that I am afraid of, and that is a fool!"

The men hurried to their tents to procure their firearms. From the window of the mess Stephen watched them, as one by one they returned and slipped into the darkened office. Then he stepped out on the porch, and seated himself beneath the full glare of the hanging electric light. Knowlton, with a dogged expression on his face, seated himself on the steps. Another man came and joined them. It was McKay.

"Let me stay here with you, Steve," he said gruffly.

"Thank you!" replied Stephen. Then he relapsed into silence.

Sitting with his watch beside him on the arm of the chair, and smoking furiously, his eye traveled to Knowlton, and dwelt on the brown oiled butt of the latter's "automatic," an odd-shaped lump against the white of his shirt.

"That was the first time I ever killed a man by accident," murmured Knowlton, half to himself. "The Doc said after supper that Rigas might possibly live another hour."

"An hour, did you say?" asked Loring. Then again he sat in silence, staring intently at his watch.

"Quarter past eight. He has lived more than an hour since supper."

From the valley, seven miles away, came softly the whistle of the evening train. The noise in camp was continually increasing in volume. Groups of miners went by the mess shouting, singing, and whooping derisively. Every now and then the babel of voices was punctuated by shots fired in rapid succession as some one emptied his gun in the air.

By the hospital a silent group was waiting, waiting for Rigas to die.

The men on the porch watched that sinister mass with apprehension. The effect was far

more suggestive than that of the noisier portion of the camp.

Suddenly the mass of men by the hospital stirred, heaved, and moved. From a hundred throats came a dull roar.

"Rigas is dead," said Loring, shutting his watch with a snap.

The crowd of men by the hospital began to roll towards the mess. As a huge swell rolls in from the sea, so the black mass, swaying, rising, falling, swept on. As it drew nearer, the white of the men's faces stood out in the glare of the electric lights even as the foam upon that wave.

"Put out the porch lights!" yelled Knowlton.

"I am manager here, and they stay lit," shouted Loring back to him.

Even as the surf curls before breaking and sweeping up the beach, so the wave of men seemed to rise and draw itself together, before surging up the steps.

Stephen had stepped forward to the edge of the steps in front of Knowlton. He raised his fist for silence, and such was the compelling force in his eyes that for a moment he was obeyed. But as he started to speak, a great

hiss arose from the crowd, like the sound of escaping steam from some giant locomotive. Loring gripped the railing of the porch hard, and again shouted something.

"God, he's crazy!" yelled Knowlton to McKay. "He is going to try and argue." Knowlton's hand lay tightly on the gun in his belt.

"Steve has lost his head again," thought McKay bitterly. "I might have known that he did n't have the stuff in him."

A bottle whizzed by Loring's ear, breaking with a crash against the wall behind him. For an instant the sound of breaking glass caught the attention of the crowd.

"You want the money in the safe?" shouted Loring.

"*Sí, sí,* yes, *sí,* yes, *sí!*" roared the crowd, in a mixture of two languages.

The sound lulled for a second. Stephen waved his keys in the air. "You shall have it."

The shouting was wilder than before, and echoed from end to end of the camp.

"Coward!" moaned McKay, sickened by such an exhibition. Some one in the crowd fired at Loring, luckily with drunken aim.

The bullet kicked up the dust at the foot of the steps. Knowlton jumped to his feet, and leveled his gun at the crowd.

"Sit down!" roared Stephen. Not knowing why he did so, Knowlton lowered his gun and sank again into his chair.

"Do you want Knowlton?" shouted Loring, pointing to the deputy beside him. As he spoke, he glanced at his watch, which lay in his hand. His face was reeking with sweat.

"Do you want Knowlton?" he shouted again.

The howl that went up from the mob was as if from the throats of blood-hungry beasts.

Knowlton's face was white; but his eyes showed their scorn of Loring. He looked at him in contempt, and looking, to his surprise, saw the tense lines of his face light with the gleam of victory.

"You want Knowlton?" he shouted for the last time. "Then come and take him!"

As the mob surged up the steps, a body of horsemen charged them fiercely from behind. Right and left galloped the riders, beating the mob over the heads with their Winchesters, or cutting them with their quirts, riding down

men beneath the weight of their horses. The mob scattered and fled in every direction. The leader of the horsemen swung out of the saddle in front of the steps, and Winchester in hand, walked up to Loring.

"Are you Mr. Loring?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Stephen.

"Well, it seems as if we were just in time — not much too early, are we? We just got your telegram in Dominion in time to raise a big posse, and pack them onto the evening train. It was about the liveliest job that I ever did, and I reckon it is one of the best," said the sheriff, surveying the scene with satisfaction. "How did the trouble start anyhow?" he asked.

Stephen explained rapidly. At the conclusion, the sheriff turned to Knowlton: "Killed him by accident, eh? Too bad you did n't have the pleasure of meaning to. Now I guess we 'd better clean up the camp a bit, had n't we, Mr. Loring?"

Stephen agreed, and the sheriff sent his deputies in groups of twos and threes, to raid the tents of the Mexicans, and gather in their arms.

Knowlton approached Loring in a stupefied manner.

"When could you have telegraphed?" he asked. "They have been guarding the roads ever since the shooting."

Stephen smiled. "When you jumped into that crowd, Knowlton, I sent Reade out through the back window of the office to send a telegram for help, and to get horses for them ready at the station camp."

A light broke over McKay's face. Walking up to Loring, he laid his hand on his shoulder.

"By God, Steve, I am proud of you!" he said. Then turning to the arc light which hung from the ceiling of the porch, he addressed it softly: "And *that's* the man we fired!"

CHAPTER XVI

IN the middle of the following September, Radlett arrived in Tucson from the East. He was on his way to pay his first visit to his property in Kay, since Stephen had taken charge. As he signed his name on the hotel register, his eye was caught by the names of the arrivals of the day before.

"Donald Cameron."

"Miss Cameron."

A flush came to his cheeks and a light to his eyes as he looked steadily at the page. Strange what power a written word may have to stir a man to the depths of his being! As Radlett read the names, he felt the years slip away from him. Five, six years was it since that summer at Bar Harbor when he and Jean Cameron had climbed together about the cliffs of the spouting horn or, staff in hand, had explored Duck Brook or floated idly in his canoe around the islands in the harbor? Like Loring he had dreamed his dream of what might be. By the

end of the summer he knew it was only a dream of what might have been. He carried away with him an ideal, an aching heart, and a knot of ribbon of the Cameron plaid. But he was a man of too much force and energy to spend his life in bewailing the past. He had shut the knot of ribbon in a secret drawer, set the ideal in a shrine, and flung his heart into business with such success that to-day, while he was still a young man, he was already a power to be reckoned with in the financial world, while a golden career opened ahead of him.

A man so loyal in his friendship could not be other than loyal in his love; but he had put the possibility of winning Jean Cameron definitely out of his mind, and he would have sworn that the years had reduced the fever of his feeling to a genial tranquillity of friendship, when now at the very sight of her name on a hotel register, all his philosophy was put to flight and he was conscious only of a burning desire to see her once more.

Being a man of action, he wasted no time on reminiscence; but inquired in quick incisive terms whether Mr. Cameron and his daughter were still at the hotel. Learning that they were,

he sent up his card. Then he lighted a cigarette and walked the floor of the lobby, smoking nervously till the bell-boy returned to say that Mr. Cameron would be glad to receive him in his private sitting-room. Before following the boy, Radlett stopped at the desk to arrange for his room and get his key.

"How good a room do you wish, sir, and how long will you stay?"

"The best you have, and as long as I choose," Radlett answered with characteristic brevity. A moment later he stood before the door of the Camerons' sitting-room, which opened at his knock to reveal Mr. Cameron's bristling red head in the foreground, and in the background a figure in a traveling dress of gray cloth, with a hat to match and a knot of plaided ribbon under the brim.

At sight of Radlett, Jean rose, smiling, but with a slight consciousness in her manner, a consciousness resulting from the remembrance of a painful scene, the hope that the man before her had quite forgiven and the slighter hope, a mere faint ashamed shadow of a hope, that he had not quite forgotten.

Her mind must have been quickly set at

rest on that point, for such a rush of feeling swept over Radlett that he could scarcely make his greetings intelligible. Mr. Cameron gave him a firm grip, and Jean held out a gray gloved hand which Radlett clasped tremulously. Mr. Cameron looked at the man and girl as they stood talking together, and the longer he looked the better he liked the combination.

"There would be a son-in-law to be proud of," he thought, naturally enough perhaps considering him in that relation first. "Baird Radlett has everything that a girl could ask, — a hard head, a long purse, a free hand and an endless stock of common sense. And then, if I had him to help me, what a property I could build up! He used to seem devoted to Jean. But she could not have refused him — no, and by heaven she should not." (Mr. Cameron liked to keep up even to himself the illusion that he was a tyrannical parent whose will was law.) "Rather different this man from Loring! Jean must see that. If she does not, she must be made to see it. I was afraid at one time that she might be foolish enough to fall in love with Loring; but I took it in time — I took it in time. Yet she is too efficient not to make some

one big mistake in her life. We Camerons all do it sooner or later. If it is not one thing it is another — misdirected energy, I suppose —" Then aloud, in answer to a question from Radlett as to how he happened to be in that part of the world: "Why, about a year and a half ago I became interested in a mine in Arizona which was not being run properly, and so for the present I am giving up my time to managing it myself."

"And have you too become a mining engineer?" Radlett asked of Jean.

"Not quite," she laughed.

"Jean came rather near it at first," added her father; "but I think that now she is half tired of the life out here. It has not the charm for her that it had at first."

"I should think not!" exclaimed Radlett emphatically. "Do you mean that you have spent a whole year out in the hills here?" he asked Jean.

"Yes," she answered. "This trip marks the first time that I have been back to the East since last fall; but I have not yet become such a savage that I can dispense with afternoon tea. I hope you will join us," she added.

"Yes, with thanks," Radlett answered. Up to this moment he had never found any use for Tucson. Now he discovered that it existed to hold a tea-table and Jean Cameron.

"What brings you to Tucson, Baird?" she asked, while the waiter laid the cloth.

"I am in the mining business myself, in a small way," he rejoined. "Last year I bought a property in Pinal County on speculation. I am going up to visit it now for the first time. I do not really need to go. In fact I shall probably do more harm than good. I have a manager up there who has accomplished wonders. He has made the mine pay in six months after he took control. As far as I can learn, he has done practically everything himself, from mining the ore to putting it on the cars. I bought the mine at a big risk, and now it is about the most satisfactory investment that I own."

"I wish that I had such a man to put in charge of Quentin. When I am not there the whole plant seems to go to pieces."

"Quentin!" exclaimed Radlett in surprise. "Is that the name of your property?"

"It is," said Mr. Cameron. "Why? Had you ever heard of it?"

Radlett opened his lips to speak; but the arrival of the tea turned the subject of conversation for the moment. As he watched Jean pouring the tea all thoughts of mines and business vanished from Radlett's mind. He wondered how he had ever existed throughout the years in which he had not seen her.

While Jean Cameron talked to Radlett, she glanced at him over her teacup with that interest which a girl naturally bestows upon a man who might have been a part of her life had she so willed it. In the past year the standards by which she judged men had changed considerably. She had much more regard for the qualities of steadiness and determination which Baird possessed than she had felt at the time when she refused him. From her widened experiences she had learned that ability without reliability was useless. Perhaps, too, now that disappointment in her new surroundings had set in, she looked back with more tenderness upon those who had peopled her life in the East.

The talk ranged over many scenes and people familiar to them all, then gradually drifted to the plans of each for the future. Baird's

mind had been working fast. Seeing Jean for an hour had made him wish to see her for many more hours, and by the time that he had finished his second cup of tea, he had evolved a plan by which he hoped to achieve that end. If he could persuade Mr. Cameron, when on his way to Quentin, to stop over at Kay, and to make an expert report on the property, it would enable him to have at least a week more with Jean. Turning to Mr. Cameron, he approached him on the subject.

"I wish very much that I could persuade you to stop over and examine my property for me. If you had the time I should greatly value your professional opinion."

"Where is your mine situated?"

"At Kay," answered Radlett. "I think it is on the direct route to Quentin."

"So you are the man who bought that property. I had not heard who owned it."

"Yes," said Baird. "Now do you think that you could possibly spare four or five days to investigate the place for me?"

"I do not know whether I can possibly spare the time," reflected Mr. Cameron, half aloud. If it had been any man besides Radlett, Mr.

Cameron would have refused at once, as he had for some time given up all such work. But he was glad to do a favor to Baird, and also he felt that he would like to have him and Jean thrown together for a while. "Still I can get in touch with Quentin, and if they need me there I can get there at short notice. Yes, I think that I can take the time. I shall be interested to see how the mine is doing with this wonderful new manager of yours. Frankly, it never used to be much good."

"Don't be discouraging, Father!" said Jean. "You might at least be an optimist until you have seen Baird's mine."

"If your father should be a pessimist after seeing it, I should certainly give up the mine, I have such respect for his judgment."

Mr. Cameron expanded under the compliment. "By the way, did you not have a big riot or something up there this spring? I read about it, I think, in the Eastern papers. They said that there had been a race riot in Kay which, but for the coolness and nerve of the manager, would have been a desperate outbreak."

"Yes, there was a desperate state of affairs," answered Radlett, and he proceeded to give an

account of the riot, the details of which he had learned through a postscript added by Reade to one of Loring's reports. When he reached the part of the story which told how the manager had held the mob at bay until the arrival of the deputies, both Jean and her father exclaimed with approval. Jean's eyes were shining with the enthusiasm which she always felt for a brave act well carried out.

"And," said Radlett in conclusion, "since then there has not been a hint of trouble in the camp. In fact a labor agitator came up there last month, and the men themselves ran him out of camp."

"You certainly have a wonderful man there," said Mr. Cameron. "If I had chanced upon him first, you would never have had him. If there is one thing on which I pride myself, it is my power to read character at first sight. I should have snapped up a man like that in no time. What is his name?"

"His name," said Radlett, "is Stephen Loring." He watched Mr. Cameron closely as he uttered the name, and was amused to see the expression of blank dismay and astonishment upon that gentleman's face,

"Loring! Stephen Loring!" cried Mr. Cameron, completely taken aback.

"Stephen Loring," repeated Radlett doggedly.

"Why, we dismissed him from Quentin for —"

"Father, don't!" ejaculated Jean suddenly. Her cheeks burned, while her eyes pleaded with her father to spare Loring's past. Radlett looked at her with a quick glance of appreciation.

"It is all right, Jean," he said. "Loring told me all about it himself."

"He told you," queried Mr. Cameron incredulously, "about the accident, about his drunkenness and all; and after that you put him in charge of the mine? How could you?"

"I believed in him," replied Radlett quietly, "and he has justified my belief. I have known him all my life, and I trust and respect him."

"You say that he has made good with you?" inquired Mr. Cameron sharply.

"He has."

Mr. Cameron was a man of honest enthusiasms, but of equally honest hatreds. When a man had once failed him, he was loath to believe that there could be good in him.

"I hope you will find that he keeps it up," was all that he said. He did not say it with complimentary conviction, either.

"He will," Radlett answered shortly.

Jean was moved by Baird's faithful defense of his friend.

"It is characteristic of you to stand by him as you have done," she said, "and if ever a man needed a good friend, it was Mr. Loring."

"You knew him well?" asked Radlett, with surprise. From what Loring had told him of his position in camp, he had not imagined that he would know Miss Cameron personally at all.

"He saved my life," answered Jean. Her voice was soft, but there was a hint of challenge in the glance that she sent toward her father.

"Saved your life!" ejaculated Radlett. "He never said anything to me about that. Just like him! He told me only of his failures."

"You have known him all your life. What was he?" asked Mr. Cameron. "Another case of a worthless fellow whom every one liked?"

"He never was worthless," said Baird. "Only until now he never showed what he was worth, and never was there a man whom his friends loved so much, to whom they forgave so much,

and from whom they continued to hope so much."

"He took a peculiar way of showing his worth with me," remarked Mr. Cameron. "Really now, Radlett, killing men by your carelessness is a pretty serious thing. And from what I can gather, I judge that for the past few years his life has been far from creditable; that he has been getting into trouble of some sort all the time. His record shows that he has been permanently inefficient and frequently drunk."

"Yes, it is all true," answered Baird, "but in all those years he was being hammered and forged, and in the end the experience has strengthened him. The things that he has gone through, even the wrong things which he has done, all have molded his character, and for the better. It was a big risk, a big chance, but by it the metal in him has been turned to steel."

"Is not that rather an expensive process by which to obtain a product like Loring?" asked Mr. Cameron dryly.

"I hope very much that when you see what Loring has done at Kay, you will change your

mind," said Radlett. "I understand of course what you must feel about him; but I think that he has wiped his slate clean. If two lives were lost through him at Quentin, by preventing a fight at Kay he has saved twenty."

"Not to mention saving my life," added Jean, rising.

"That alone should extenuate everything," said Radlett earnestly.

He looked after Jean as she left the room to dress for dinner, admiring her proud, erect carriage, and devoutly thankful that he should have several days in which to be with her.

When she had gone, the two men resumed their seats, and proceeded to discuss the plans and business arrangements for Mr. Cameron's prospective visit to Kay. But even while he was talking, Mr. Cameron's decision in regard to the visit was wavering, and later, as he went upstairs, he shook his head and said to himself: "No, I can't do it. Under the circumstances that visit is an impossibility."

That night, when they had come upstairs from dinner, he went to Jean's door and knocked.

"Jean," he called.

"Yes, Father."

"Can you come into my sitting-room? I want to talk with you."

They returned to his sitting-room, and Jean seated herself while her father walked slowly up and down the room.

"I have been thinking about our going with Baird up to his mine. I told him that we would go; but if this fellow Loring is the manager there, I do not think that we can. I shall tell Baird that we find it impossible."

"Why?" asked Jean, although she well knew the reason.

"Why?" echoed her father irritably. "Do you remember the insulting letter which he wrote to me after my offer of help to him at Dominion? Do you think it would be a pleasure to meet him again with that letter in mind?"

"You never told me what you wrote in your letter to him," replied Jean, parrying the question.

"I offered him work in the north because I said we were under obligation to him for saving — That is, to repay my debt to him."

"I suppose that you made no conditions?"

"Only that he should never cross our path

again," responded her father. "Of course I felt bound to tell him what I thought of him."

"In other words," exclaimed Jean with spirit, "you insulted him, and now are angry that he was gentleman enough to refuse your offer. When he was practically starving, as Baird told me he was, he refused to take advantage of an unwilling obligation. Is that why you do not want to go to Kay?" There was pride in the quiver of her nostrils, and pity in her eyes, as she spoke.

Mr. Cameron, like many strong men, was at a disadvantage in an argument with his daughter. Her strength of will was as great as his, and with it she combined an intuitive knowledge of whither to direct her questions, as a good fencer instinctively knows the weak points in his opponent's defense.

"You are trying to put me in the wrong, Jean," said her father testily, "but the fact remains that we cannot go."

"The fact remains, Father, that you owe it to yourself to go, not only because you have promised Baird" (here she scored a strong point, for the keeping of his word was her father's great pride), "but because you owe it to Mr.

Loring to atone for the wrong that you did him."

Mr. Cameron was in a quandary. On the one side was his desire not to see Loring again or to have Jean meet him; on the other was the fact that he had promised Radlett and that he wished to have him and Jean thrown together. With his usual bluntness he asked his daughter: "Jean, have you thought much of Loring since he left Quentin?"

"A great deal, Father."

"Often?"

"Very often."

"Damn me! I was afraid of it. But you may as well understand now that I absolutely forbid your thinking of him any more."

"Be careful, Father, that you do not add to my real interest the fictitious one of defiance which has always been strong in the Cameron blood. What I have been thinking all these months about Mr. Loring is that he is a man to whom we are under deep obligation, and one to whom you have been unjust."

"I thought," said Mr. Cameron helplessly, and foolishly allowing his attack to be changed to defense, "that I had done everything possible

for Loring. I do not wish to be thought ungrateful to any man; but that letter —"

Jean was touched and coming over to her father, put her arms around him saying: "Can't you see, Father dear, that the letter he sent to you was the only one which a gentleman could write under the circumstances."

"Perhaps so, perhaps," answered Mr. Cameron. "And anyhow," he went on rather weakly, "I have promised Baird, and Jean, I want you to see more of him. He is, I think, of all the men whom I know, the best and the most trustworthy. He told me that some time ago you refused to marry him."

"Yes," said Jean.

"Have you ever changed at all? Do you not like him better than you did? He is the man of all others whom I should rather see you marry."

"I always liked him and I like him better than ever now," replied Jean, with her usual frankness. "Only it would take me at least a week to fall in love with him," she added laughing, as she kissed her father and bade him good night.

That evening she sat up until it was late,

thinking. She had begun to see life in the West rather differently since her first rose-colored impressions. She was beginning to realize the facts that her father had quoted to her. The shoddiness of that life had begun to make itself felt. She had believed in Loring with all the trust to which a reserved nature yields itself when it becomes impetuous, and his complete failure had been a deep shock to her. She had not forgotten him, however, though, had she analyzed her thoughts, she would have been puzzled to know why he had not passed from her memory. Now that he was to be brought into her life again, her thought of him grew deeper and more personal. She opened her trunk and drew out of it her journal of the past year. For an hour she sat reading over the pages, and there were certain pages which she reread. When she closed the book it was close to midnight. She sat staring out of the window, thinking, wondering. The light in her eyes was like the harbor lights veiled by night mist to the mariner homeward bound, — now flashing clear and lambent, now dim, brilliant with the seaward flash or soft in the afterglow.

At length she rose as one tired of thinking;

but as she brushed out the long waves of her hair she hummed softly the old refrain:

"Young Frank is chief of Errington
And lord o' Langly Dale —
His step is first in peaceful ha'
His sword in battle keen —
But aye she let the tears doon fa'
For Jock o' Hazeldean."

CHAPTER XVII

IN the weeks which followed the settling of the trouble in the camp, Kay flourished and grew. Great trainloads of supplies were daily dumped on the platform of the railway station, to be checked off and sorted, before the final haul up to camp. The old rough road to the station had become hard and smooth by the continual pounding of the heavy, six-mule wagons. Under McKay's master direction, the framework bridges on the route had been replaced by substantial structures. Wherever a cañon or gulch opened, sluice boxes had been buried beneath the road surface, so that a heavy rain no longer meant washouts and consequent stoppage of coke and supplies. The coke teams struggled back to the railroad almost as heavily laden with matt, as on the upward trip they had been with coke. Each day saw new framework houses built, and new families settling their possessions. Wagons were driven into camp laden with battered stoves, broken chairs, a stray dog or

two, and in general the household belongings of new settlers; for the growth of the "lilies of the field" is as nothing compared with that of a prosperous mining camp. Each day the office was filled with men clamoring for lumber: "Only a little, Boss! Just to put in a flooring. We can get along with two boards on the sides. Anything just so as we can get settled." And Loring sat behind his desk, speaking with kindly but evasive words, telling each that the Company longed to build him a perfect palace, but that under the present conditions he must wait.

For fast as lumber was hauled into camp, still faster came the need for it for mine timbering, for storehouses, and for a thousand and one necessities. The construction work had been rushed to completion. The huge new ore cribs were a triumph of McKay's ingenuity, built by a clever system of bracing from the unseasoned lumber that had been at hand, and supporting with perfect safety the enormous strain to which they were subjected. The Company was rapidly becoming the controlling factor in the copper output of the district.

It was the time for the arrival of the evening

mail and the office was full of men and tobacco smoke. McKay had pre-empted the safe and sat on the top of it, clanking his heels against the sides. His sandy colored hair matched the color of the pine boards of the wall against which he was propped. The draughting tables carried their load of men, as did each of the well-worn chairs, and the three-legged stool. A babel of voices prevailed. Every now and then Reade opened the door from the back office, and poking his head into the room with a disgusted expression upon his face, called out; "Soft pedal there, soft pedal! How in hell can a man do any work with you fellows raising such a racket?"

Stephen, as usual sat at his roll-top desk in the corner, his feet up on the slide, both hands in his pockets, the while he rocked his pipe gently up and down in his teeth. One of the clerks was telling with becoming modesty of his social triumphs in Phœnix at the "Elks" ball. The audience listened with the listless attention of those whose curiosity hangs heavy on their hands.

"I was the candy kid, all right," remarked the narrator.

His fervid discourse was interrupted by a drawl from some one in the background. "I reckon that some time you must have drunk copiouslike of the Hassayampeh River."

A machinery drummer who was in the office cocked up his ears, thinking that perhaps behind the allusion lay a doubtful story.

"What 's that about the river ?" he asked. "I never heard of that."

"Why, they say," answered the first speaker, "that whoever drinks of the Hassayampeh River can 't ever tell the truth again so long as he lives."

"And also," added McKay, "that no matter where he drifts to, he is sure to wander back again to the old territory; that he 'll die in Arizona."

"How was that story ever started ?" Loring asked.

"The valley of the Hassayampeh was one of the first trails into the ore country," answered McKay, "and the lies that emanated from the camps along that river was of such a fearful, godless and prize package variety that they made the old river famous. There was a fellow in camp here only the other day was telling me

about prospectin' down there in seventy-three. He said all they had to eat was fried Gila monster. I guess that was after he 'd drunk the water though," finished McKay reflectively.

"The territory sure has gone off since those days," said a cattleman who had ridden into camp for his mail. "Only last year down near Roosevelt I shot two Mexicans, and say, it cost me a hundred dollars for negligence," he went on indignantly, "and the sons of guns war n't wurth more than twelve dollars and two bits apiece."

"You are right about the way Arizona is going to hell," said the mine foreman. "I don't know as any of you fellows ever knowed 'Teeth' Barker. Anyhow, next to what his father must have been, he was the ugliest creature that ever lived on this earth. All of his teeth just naturally stuck out like the cowcatcher of an engine. Well, in spite of that, he always was a good friend of mine. Least he used to be.

"About six months ago I was up to Jerome, and they was telling about an accident there. A man no one knowed at all was killed, but a fellow said he had the ugliest tusks he ever seed. I knew at once that must be

Barker. They said they 'd planted him up on the knoll, and so," continued the foreman sadly, "and so, although it was a powerful hot day, I struggled up to the knoll with a nice piece of pine board, and a jack-knife, and I sort of located 'Teeth' with a handsome monument and an exaggerated epitaph.

"I came down as hot as the devil, and steps into a saloon to get a drink, when who should walk up to me but 'Teeth' Barker himself!

"'You 're dead,' said I.

"'Do I look like it?' he asked. He got sort of hot under the collar about it, too.

"Well, the long and short of it all was that I had gone and taken all that trouble with a tombstone for a stranger.

"'The least that you can do, "Teeth" Barker,' said I, 'is to come up and see that beautiful monument I erected over you. It took as much trouble to make as a year's assessment work.'

"Well, he did n't see it that way. Said he would n't go up there if I was to pay him. And that was after I had taken all that trouble! Gratitude! There ain't no such thing any more in Arizona," concluded the foreman.

Story after story was put forth for the edifica-

tion of the crowd until the grating of wheels outside told of the arrival of the stage. A moment later heavy footsteps resounded on the porch, and the burly stage-driver, with two great mail-sacks slung over his shoulder, swung into the office.

"Evening, gents!" he called in answer to the general salutation. He stepped over to Stephen's desk and threw down a little bunch of envelopes. "Four telegrams," he said.

Loring rapidly slit open the envelopes, laying the telegrams on one side, and after running through the contents, began to sort the mail.

"Any passengers?" he asked the driver.

"Yes, six. Drummers mostly. They are over there eating now. There was two men and a lady; but they stopped to eat supper at the station. They will be up later."

"It 's lucky Mrs. Brown built those new sleeping quarters to her place; she 'll be running a regular hotel here soon," said the driver, as he swung on his heel and tramped out to unharness his horses.

Stephen sorted the mail rapidly, and deftly scaled the letters to the fortunate recipients.

"That is all," he said, as he tossed the last.

Every one left the office with the exception of McKay who, with a woebegone expression on his face, lingered behind.

"What is the matter?" asked Loring.

"Nothing," answered McKay gruffly.

"Well, how is this?" said Stephen, taking from his pocket a letter which was addressed in large square characters to McKay. "You see she did not forget you, after all."

McKay blushed to the roots of his hair, then opened the letter with seeming nonchalance.

"It seems to me that you have a pretty steady correspondent there," said Stephen, while he straightened up his desk preparatory to the evening's work. "I have handed you a letter like that every night this week." McKay colored even more, then stretched out his hand. "Shake, Steve! I am going to get spliced. I have been meaning to tell you before this."

Loring jumped up and pounded him on the back.

"You gay winner of hearts, who is she?"

"Do you remember Jane Stevens, back at Quentin? Well, it 's her."

Loring's eyes twinkled. "How did you ever get the nerve?" he asked.

At the thought of his audacity, the perspiration broke out on McKay's forehead.

"Well she had me plumb locoed. I remember once a horse had me buffaloed the same way," he explained. "I was scared, scared blue, Steve; but finally I got up my nerve and thought I 'd go and break my affections to her gentle and polite like. So one day I rode over to their place, — you know where it is was, just south of the Dominion trail, — and I thought I 'd go to see her brother Charlie and fix it up with him. When I reached their shack she came to the door looking as neat as a partridge and with a sort of smile hidden somewhere in her face, and — and I 'll be damned if I did n't kiss her right then without any formalities."

"That was the simplest solution of the problem, was n't it?" laughed Stephen. "When are you going to be married?"

"Oh, soon, I guess; but I wish it could be managed as simply as these Mexicans do. And how about you, Steve?" continued McKay. "You ain't been took this way yourself, have you? Not that woman you was telling me about in Mexico."

Loring shook his head. "Unfortunately she was a married woman."

"I sort of thought," went on McKay, "that you and Miss Cameron was — "

"Well, you thought wrongly," interrupted Loring sharply. "I never expect to see Miss Cameron again."

There came a ripple of laughter from the doorway, and looking up quickly he saw Jean and her father walk into the office. Behind them stood Baird Radlett.

"What a hospitable form of welcome!" exclaimed Miss Cameron, smiling at him frankly.

For a moment Loring swayed in his chair, then he rose stiffly, as a man in a trance. He stared at Jean with an absorption that was almost rude, as if there were nothing in the universe beyond her. There lay a hint of laughter in the gray depths of her eyes.

"What is the matter?" asked Radlett. "Are you surprised to see us? Did n't you get my letter?"

"It is probably in to-night's mail which I have n't opened yet," answered Loring, still half dazed.

"Mr. Cameron has consented to come and

make a report on the property for me," explained Baird.

Mr. Cameron came forward and held out his hand. "Mr. Loring, I have heard of the splendid work that you have done here. I want to congratulate you." This little speech was a hard one for Mr. Cameron to make; but he was a man who, when he had once made up his mind to the right course, followed it to the end.

The expression of pride in Stephen's face turned to one of appreciation, and he shook Mr. Cameron's hand with a firm, grateful pressure. But all the while he was looking at Jean longingly, worshipingly, all unconscious of the intensity of his gaze, as a man who for days has been in the desert without water looks upon the sudden spring. In all the months that he had thought of her, dreamed of her, she had never seemed to have the beauty, the potential tenderness, which marked her now when she stood before him, her look telling him that she was proud of what her friend had been and done.

To Radlett, looking at them both, came a sudden suspicion, and a sudden despair.

Jean, at Loring's request, seated herself at his desk, in the big revolving chair, and while playing absent-mindedly with the papers on the desk, kept up a laughing discussion with Baird.

Loring, at the other side of the room, was answering Mr. Cameron's businesslike questions as to the grade of the ore, the force, the cost of production, accurately and fast, as though almost every faculty in his body and mind were not concentrated upon the girl who seemed to be having such an interesting talk with Radlett. Finishing his talk with Mr. Cameron, Loring left the office to arrange for sleeping quarters for the visitors. In a few minutes he returned with the announcement that all was ready, and led the way to the long, low building next the mess, whose many rooms, opening on a broad porch, served as accommodations for strangers in camp.

Loring walked beside Miss Cameron, doing his best to talk unconcernedly of every-day matters, but the hoarseness of his voice betrayed him.

"I am very sorry to have to offer you such rough quarters," he said to Jean, as they

reached the house, "but they are the best that we have. In another month we hope to have something more comfortable to give to our guests."

"In another month, Stephen, you will have an up-to-date city constructed here," exclaimed Radlett, with an almost reluctant enthusiasm.

At the steps Stephen and Radlett said good-night to the others, and walked slowly back to Stephen's quarters, which they were to share.

Loring sat on the edge of his cot, and smoked slowly while he watched Baird unpack his valise, and with the method of an orderly nature put everything away in the rough chest of drawers, or on the black iron hooks which protruded from the wall. Espying a tin of expensive tobacco neatly packed amidst a circle of collars, Stephen pounced upon it, and knocking out the contents of his pipe, proceeded to fill it with the new mixture. Radlett finished his unpacking, and recovering the tobacco can from Loring, filled his own pipe. Then he tipped a chair back against the wall, and sitting in it, regarded Loring for a moment in silence.

"Stephen," he remarked after a few seconds,

"you have done a good piece of work. I knew that you would."

Loring's irrelevant answer was to the effect that the tobacco which he had stolen was good. It was an odd characteristic of this man that though his nature contained many streaks of vanity, praise for work which he knew was good embarrassed him. At length he began to appreciate the ungraciousness of his response to Radlett's advances, and leaning forward, with his elbows on his knees, he said: "You cannot guess what it means to me, Baird, to have you say things like that, to be patted on the back and made to feel as if I had done something, and that by a man who has succeeded in everything to which he has turned his hand, who has won all the big prizes of life."

Radlett drew back into the shadow where the lamplight could not reveal the expression of his face.

"All the prizes in life?" he queried with scornful emphasis. "No, not all by a damn sight. You see, Stephen, I feel as if Fate had stood over me with a deuced ironical smile, and said: 'You shall have your every wish in life — except the one thing that you want

most of all — the one thing that would make you happy.'"

"Hm," murmured Loring, shaking out the embers from his pipe and gazing into the empty bowl. "With any one else I should say that meant a woman; but with you it could not be."

"Why not with me as well as with any other man?"

"Because there is no woman alive who would be fool enough to refuse you."

"Bless your heart, Stephen! It is only your blind loyalty that makes you think me irresistible."

"Do you mean that there really is a woman so benighted? What is she thinking of?"

"I imagine," answered Radlett slowly, "that you might change that 'what' to *whom*."

"You would have me believe that knowing you, she prefers some one else?" asked Loring incredulously. "Why, Baird, it is impossible."

"By no means. I think I know the man."

Loring's blood boiled. "Who is the brute?" he cried out. "Tell me and I will kill him, break his neck, shoot him."

Baird smiled wryly, blew a cloud of smoke

toward the roof, and observed: "If I were you, Stephen, I would do nothing rash. But come, we have talked long enough of me and my affairs. Let us talk now about you and yours! Suppose, for instance, you tell me why you turned the color of a meerschaum pipe when Miss Cameron appeared in the doorway to-night."

Loring started and looked quickly at Radlett. "You noticed that, did you? Well, you have a quick eye and a gift for drawing conclusions, but they may not always be right."

"Not always, no; but this time they are, are n't they? Be honest, Stephen, are you or are you not in love with Jean Cameron?"

"Excuse me, but that can not interest you to know."

"Perhaps not, and perhaps it is a damned impertinence to inquire, but after all an old friendship gives some privileges."

"Of course it does!" exclaimed Stephen, tilting down his chair. He walked across the room to Radlett's seat and stood behind him. "See here, Baird. I did not want to speak of this thing because I was afraid of breaking down and making an ass of myself generally.

You don't know what it is to be placed as I am. When you asked a girl to marry you, you had something to offer her, whether she had the sense to take it or not. You offered her a clean life, a fortune honorably made, an untarnished name, while I, — why even if there were the remotest chance that Miss Cameron would look at me, I should be a brute to ask her. The more I cared for her, the less I could do it. So you see, for me it must be 'the desire of the moth for the star.' A man must abide by the consequences of his acts; he must take his medicine, and if mine is bitter, it may do me all the more good only — only I cannot talk about it. Good night!"

Radlett did not answer; but long after Stephen was asleep, or pretended to be, Baird lay staring at the rafters. "To lay down his life for his friend," he said to himself. "That would not be the hardest thing. To lay down his love! I wonder if I am man enough to do it."

CHAPTER XVIII

DURING the week which the Camerons spent in camp at Kay, it was amusing to notice the change in the appearance of the men at the mess. Dilapidated flannel shirts and khaki trousers the worse for wear had been supplanted at supper time by self-conscious black suits and very white ties. The camp barber made enough money to tide him over many months.

Mr. Cameron had spent a very busy week, examining with Loring all the details of the work, and daily his respect had grown for the man whom he had so despised. The evening before the last which she was to spend in Kay, Jean announced her intention of visiting the "workings" with her father when he should go the next day. Loring said that it was not safe; her father protested; Radlett argued with her, and as the net result of all she appeared the following morning with her determination unchanged.

The porch of the mess a few minutes before

breakfast time was always crowded. Men on their way back from the night shift made a practise of stopping to exchange a few words. It was a quieter gathering than in the evening, for ahead lay the prospect of a long day's work. Yet an air of comfort always prevailed. The five minutes before breakfast made a precious interval in which to loaf, a delightful time when one could stretch himself against the wall and bask in the sunlight

Jean and her father came up to the veranda with a friendly "good morning" to those who were gathered there. A few of the loiterers talked respectfully to Mr. Cameron, whose fame as a mining expert was a wide one, and Jean quickly became the center of a large group of men, eager to point out to her the different mountains, the Grahams in the distance or the long sharp ridges of the neighboring range. They called her attention to the mist hanging low in the valley, curling softly in the farthest recesses. The mine foreman, usually the most shiftlessly dressed man in camp, twitched his polka-dotted tie into place when he thought that Miss Cameron's attention was absorbed by the landscape.

Stephen came across from his quarters among the last. He waited a moment before joining the group about Miss Cameron; and his eyes employed that moment in fixing a picture indelibly on his mind. As Jean leaned lightly against the wall, in her dress of white linen crash, she made a picture which no one who saw could forget. Her gray eyes were clear with the reflection of the morning light, and the sun searched for and illuminated the subtle tints of her hair. She had a pretty way of speaking as though everything she said were a simple answer to a clever question. Men liked that. They thought her appreciative.

She looked up to notice Loring's glance upon her, and answered his "good morning" lightly. "You need not speak as though you were surprised, Mr. Loring," she said, "I may have been late to breakfast five out of my six days, but that is no sign that it is a habit with me. Besides, you know that to-day I am to visit the mine."

"So you are still determined?" he asked. "Really, Miss Cameron, it is not very safe. There might be an accident of some sort, and," he went on, looking at her gown, "you will ruin your dress."

"Do you fancy that I travel with only one?" Jean queried smiling. "It may be so, but not even my vanity shall deter me; I really must go."

Just then Wah appeared on the veranda, and began to pound with his railroad spike on the iron triangle which, as at Quentin, served for a dinner gong.

"La, la, boom, boom! Breakfast!" he shouted, amidst the din which he was creating. "Me bludder, Steve, he almost late. La, la, boom, boom! Hot cakes, hot cakes; oh, lubbly hot cakes, oh, lubbly, lubbly —!"

In the midst of his song he caught sight of Jean, and stopping his pounding he beamed upon her.

"Goodee morning, missee, goodee morning! Missee on time this morning; how it happen?"

McKay angrily told him to shut up, but Miss Cameron stopped the rebuke, assuring Wah that his reproaches had been well deserved.

Several minutes after the others had begun their meal, Radlett appeared at breakfast, still struggling against sleepiness. Not even the clear early morning air had thoroughly aroused him. Breakfasts at half-past six were a distinct

and not wholly appreciated novelty to Baird. He slipped into his place beside Jean, and endeavored to parry her banter upon his indolence. Stephen, at his side of the table, was occupied in dispensing the platter of "flap jacks," which Wah, beaming with appreciation of their excellence, had set before him to serve.

"At what time do we visit the mine?" asked Jean across the table.

"As soon after breakfast as you and your father are ready," answered Stephen. "The air is much better early in the day, before they have begun to shoot down there. But I wish that you would change your mind about going."

Jean turned to the mine foreman for assistance.

"It is perfectly safe, is n't it, Mr. Burns?" "I know that all my father and Mr. Loring think is that I shall be in the way."

Burns laboriously protested against such an idea, and clumsily promised to look after her safety.

In the minutes that preceded the seven o'clock whistle, one by one the men straggled off to their work, nodding respectfully to Jean and her father as they left, and calling out parting

gibes at Wah. By the time that the whistle blew, the line of ponies picketed to the fence before the mess had disappeared, and the community was at work.

As soon after breakfast as Mr. Cameron had smoked his morning cigar, he joined Radlett and Loring, and with Miss Cameron all walked up to the mouth of the nearest shaft. Burns met them at the shaft house, and selected from the pile of oilskins a "slicker" for Miss Cameron. She struggled helplessly with the stiff buttonholes, and Loring was obliged to button the coat for her. His fingers, though stronger than hers, were not much more efficient, owing to their trembling.

"Where are the candles, Burns?" asked Loring.

Burns pointed to a box in one corner of the shaft house. Stephen took out a half dozen, and handed one to each of the visitors. He put a broken one into the spike candle holder which he carried, and slipped the others into his capacious pockets.

The "skip" shot up and was unloaded. "All ready!" called Burns, steadying the bucket by the level of the shaft mouth. Jean stepped

forward and looked at the bucket just a bit askance. Loring showed her how to place her hands on the heavy iron links above the swivel, and how to stand on the edge of the bucket with her heels over the edge.

"Look out that your skirt does not hit against the side of the shaft!" was his final injunction.

"Can we go down now?" he asked Burns.

"One second," answered the foreman. "There is a load of sharpened drills to go down with us."

In a moment the little "nipper" appeared with his armful of drills, and with a ringing clatter dropped them into the bottom of the bucket.

"I think we had better take Mr. Cameron to the four hundred level right away," said Stephen to Burns. "I want him to see that new stope. The air is n't very bad there, is it?"

"No, it 's pretty fair."

"All right. Lower away, four hundred!" called Loring to the hoist engineer, at the same time swinging himself onto the bucket beside the others.

The skip began to drop slowly down the

timbered shaft. For the first twenty-five or thirty feet it was fairly light, and Jean could see the joints in the rough-grained, greasy boards. Then all became dark. She clutched the cable tightly and half closed her eyes. The water began to drip down hard from above, spattering sharply on their oilskins. Loring, close beside her, whispered: "All right. Just hold on tightly, Miss Cameron! Great elevator, is n't it?"

Even while Loring spoke, a chill struck to his heart. What if the hoist engineer failed in his duty! What if the bucket crashed into the black depths that lay below them, or shot wildly upward to be caught in the timbers at the top! What if Jean Cameron were to be snatched away as *those others* had been, through the wanton carelessness of the man in charge above! Would any punishment be black enough for him? Would eternity be long enough for him to make a decent repentance?

By the vigor of the answer which his heart made to the question, Loring sensed the pang of remorse which had gnawed at his conscience without ceasing ever since that awful night. "That was what you did." The words said

themselves over and over in his ear as the bucket slid downward.

The air began to turn from the pure clear atmosphere of the mountains to the heavy close humidity of the mine, murky even in its blackness.

"One hundred level," explained Stephen, as the bucket dropped past a candle which flickered dully in a smoky hole in the side of the shaft, the entrance to the drift which was even blacker than the shaft itself.

As they reached the lower levels, the water poured down faster. The bucket swung and twisted and Jean leaned an imperceptible trifle closer to Loring. He steadied her with his arm, although it may not have been strictly necessary for safety.

The bucket suddenly stopped and hung lifelessly steady.

"Here we are, four hundred foot level," called Loring. "Please stay just where you are, Miss Cameron, and we will help you off." He swung himself onto the landing stage after the others, and taking both of Jean's hands in his, guided her safely into the drift.

She stood for a moment completely con-

fused, unable to make out anything. Loring leaned out into the shaft, and pulling the bell cord, signaled to have the bucket raised again. Then he took Jean's candle, and biting off the wax from about the wick, lighted it and his own, holding them under a small protecting ledge of rock. To Jean's unaccustomed eyes the little flickerings made small difference in the darkness. She stepped into a pool of water that lay in the middle of the drift, wetting her boots to the ankles.

"Careful!" said Loring, taking her by the arm. "Keep your eyes on Burns's candle ahead there. I will see that you don't fall."

For a couple of hundred yards they walked on straight ahead down the drift. Jean's eyes began to grow accustomed to the gray blackness, and now, when the roof of the tunnel grew suddenly lower, she stooped almost by instinct.

"Look out for the winze, Miss!" called back Burns.

"All right!" answered Loring. "This runs to the next level, a hundred feet down," he explained, as he helped Jean to cross the plank which bridged a black chasm. She noticed the rails of a little track which ran beneath their

feet, and almost as she was on the point of asking its purpose, from far ahead in the darkness came a shrill, weird whistle, and a heavy rumble.

Loring caught her and held her back against the side wall as a "mucker" ran past, wheeling a heavy ore car towards the shaft and whistling as warning to clear the track. She began to feel the effects of the powder fumes in the air, and it made her head heavy and drowsy. She felt that she had come into a new, supernatural universe, where all was noisy, dark, and strange.

At last the drift broadened out into a large, irregular-shaped chamber.

"Esperanza stope," said Loring to Miss Cameron. "Here is where they have struck the contact vein, where the porphyry changes to limestone." He held his candle close to the dark wall of rock, and she could see the green crusting betokening the copper.

"This will assay pretty close to ten per cent, won't it, Burns?" asked Loring.

"It ran to twelve, yesterday," answered the foreman.

They stood still for a moment. All about

them, as in the crypt of some vast cathedral, were specks of light, showing through the dense air, the candles of the miners. Now and then in the blur there appeared a distorted shape, as some one moved before a candle. Through all, loud, insistent, steady, rang the clink-clang, clink-clang, clink-clang of the drills and hammers, as a dozen miners drove home the holes into the breast of the stope, the tapping of the cleaning rods, as they spooned out the mud, and the rattle of shovels on rock, as the "muckers" loaded the ore cars. Mixed with these sounds was a sharp hissing, as the miners drew in their breath, swaying back for the driving blow on the heads of the drills. As she grew accustomed to the dim light, Jean could make out the miners who were nearest to her, as, in teams of two, stripped to the waist, their bodies shiny with sweat, they battered on the walls. Faintly the lines of grim archways began to grow out of the dark, where rough pillars had been left to support the roofing. Far off, up a cross-cut, she could see more candles swaying. Two men near her were toiling at a windlass, raising the water from a new winze. She leaned against the wall, and something rattled tinnily. It was

a pile of canteens, all warm with the heat of the air.

Jean gasped with the very wonder of the scene. To the others it was merely the commonplace of their work.

Burns called out to Loring: "We are going to take Mr. Cameron through to the new stope. It is pretty hard climbing getting through to there. I guess the lady had better wait here with you, Mr. Loring."

The voices of the rest of the party sounded faint and far away. Jean watched the light of their candles sway and dip, as they walked off down a tunnel, then disappear as a supporting pillar hid them from view.

Loring led her to one side of the stope, and drove the spike of his candle stick into a niche in the soft rock wall. He pointed to a pile of loose ore.

"We can sit here until your father returns. They are not working this end of the stope now," he said.

She nodded and seated herself with her back against the wall. Silent, with her chin propped firmly in her clenched hands, she strained her eyes to look at the dim lights and shadows at

the other end of the stope, and watched the shadows grow into things, as she stared. Far beneath her, in the solid rock, she heard faint indistinct taps. A trifle awed by the mystery she turned to Loring.

"What is that sound?" she asked.

"Those are 'Tommy knockers,'" he answered gravely. "They are the ghosts of men who were killed in an explosion here, tapping steadily for help."

"Really?" she asked, half laughing.

"It might be," answered Loring, "but the fact of it is that those are men drilling on the next level. The sound now and then carries clear through the rock."

The candle in the niche behind her cast a dim light over the soft curves of Jean's cheeks, rising delicately above the rough yellow oilskin coat. Loring beside her, looked down at her intently. Turning, she inadvertently brushed against his sleeve, and he quivered as though it had been a blow. The silence was growing oppressive with significance. Suddenly Jean broke it, saying: "Mr. Loring, I may not have another opportunity of speaking with you alone while we are in Kay. I must use this chance

to tell you what pleasure it has given me to hear of your achievements here, of your courage in the riot and of — " Jean paused and seemed to choose her words carefully, "of your victory."

"Oh," answered Stephen, with an attempt at ease, while all the time his heart was beating like a trip-hammer, "I suppose Baird has been talking about me; but you must not take him too literally. There is no libel law against flattery, and so men speak their minds about their friends as freely as they would like to do about their enemies. Miss Cameron," he said suddenly, "I have never thanked you for the note which you sent me when I left Quentin. But you must know how grateful I felt. I did not deserve your trust; but I cannot tell you how it helped me."

She shook her head slowly, and when she spoke her voice was very soft. "I am glad if it helped you, but you would have won your fight without it, I think." Her tone held a shadow of question.

"The whole struggle would not have seemed worth while without that, and without the truest friend in the world to help. Miss Cameron, Baird Radlett came to me when I had

fallen as low as a man could fall. He and your note saved me."

"No," answered Jean, "you saved yourself. I think you were saved from the time of that dreadful night at Quentin, only you did not know it."

The roar of an ore car rushing by drowned her voice. A moment later Stephen spoke in a hard, dry tone. "I am not sure," he said, "that I know exactly what salvation means. If it means that I am not likely to make a beast of myself any more, or murder any more men, I am glad to believe it is so; but after all what does it matter to me? I have lost my chance, thrown it away, and life cannot hold anything particularly cheerful for me after that."

"No, no!" Jean exclaimed with a swift inexplicable pang at her heart. "You must not say that. There are chances ahead in life for every one."

"Yes, chances; but not *the* chance."

"Am I *the* chance?" Jean asked, in a voice so low that it could scarcely be heard above the echoes.

Loring bowed his head, with such dejection in his bearing as struck to the heart of the girl

beside him. Jean had been thinking, thinking hard. The quick throbbing in her temples attested to the intensity of her mood. She knew in that instant that she cared for the man at her side; but how much? Enough to run the risk?

"Mr. Loring," she said at length slowly, as if weighing her words, "I know that you care for me; but, and it is hard to say" — she laid her hand on his arm and tried to meet his eyes — "but I don't quite trust you." She felt his arm stiffen and quiver, but she went on, although her voice broke: "I know that you are brave. I owe my life to that." She paid no attention to the gesture with which he waved aside all obligation. "I respect you more than I can say for the fight that you have made against habit, only — "

"Only?" echoed Stephen slowly.

"Only — oh, can't you see that if I were to marry you and all the time there were in my heart a doubt, even though the merest shadow, that neither of us could be happy?"

Loring crushed between his fingers a piece of the soft ore and let the fragments trickle to the ground before he spoke. "It is more than a

year now, Jean. Must the shadow last forever? Is what I have done to remain forever unpardoned?" He spoke with the slowness of an advocate who knows his case is lost, yet fights to the end.

"It is not that, Stephen. I could forgive almost anything that you have done. But there is one thing that you have done, that try as I would, I could never forget. Stephen, let me ask it of you. What is the most essential quality of all in a — a — friend?"

"Honesty," answered Loring, without a moment's hesitation.

"And suppose you knew that a friend had utterly fallen from honesty?"

"I should then feel that the word "friend" no longer applied."

Loring was dazed. He did not know of her cousin's story of his dishonesty in his relations with his guardian. He thought only of the promise he had made to her on their ride in Quentin and the manner in which he had broken it. "Yes," he went on slowly, "I suppose when a man breaks his solemn word he shatters forever the mold of his character."

"I want you to understand that it is only

because I cannot forget that one thing, that my trust in you is not absolute."

Loring straightened himself, and for a second turned his head away. "That," said he, "is why I said I had lost *the* chance."

A wave of pity swept over Jean. "And yet, Stephen," she whispered, "I —"

"Oh, Steve! Where are you?" came from out of the darkness. "We are going up now. Mr. Cameron thinks we have a fine strike there."

Stephen helped Jean to her feet. Then silently he led the way back to the shaft.

CHAPTER XIX

INANIMATE things, the poets to the contrary, do not share human moods. When Loring returned to his desk in the office the typewriter, instead of showing the least sympathy, behaved abominably. Ordinarily the letter "J" on a well-constructed machine is on the side, and little used. But this afternoon it seemed to insist on beginning every word, and the effect on the business letters which should have been composed was not beneficial. But this is perhaps explained by the few terse words concluding the pamphlet of directions which accompanied the machine: "No machine ever made is *fool proof.*" So Loring had the extra task of carefully proofreading all his letters. Being in love always has one of two effects on a man's work. He either does twice as much work half as well, or half as much work twice as well; but no man truly in love has been able to reverse these, and double both his zeal and efficiency. This kind of inspiration has a sin-

gular disregard for detail, and when it does deign to notice the minute side of things, it magnifies them to such an extent that the ultimate aim is likely to be obscured. As proof of the above statement, between luncheon and supper time, Stephen accomplished twice his usual amount of work with a little less than half his customary efficiency.

His work done, Loring banged the cover onto the typewriter with a little more force than was necessary, for if inanimate things cannot share moods, they are still delightful objects on which to vent overwrought feelings. Stephen's hat was on the table behind the swivel chair, and it was characteristic of him that he used great exertion to secure it without rising, twisting the chair into positions which defied all the laws of gravity. Having set the soft hat at its accustomed slightly tilted angle, he lit his pipe and frowned at the garish appearance of the yellow oak of his desk. Then he rose with the indecisive motion of one who, when on his feet, wonders why he has left his chair. Ordinarily Stephen was a trifle late at supper on account of staying to lock up the office, and to-night from an illogical dread of the thing which he

half longed for, half wished to avoid, a talk with Jean, he did not reach the table until all the others had left.

Wah glided in from the kitchen with a fresh pot of coffee which he set before Stephen, together with the choicest selections from the supper which he had as usual saved for him. When Loring rose from the table, leaving the larger portion of his meal uneaten, Wah looked at him reproachfully from the inscrutable depths of his slanting eyes.

Baird Radlett, Jean, and a few others were still gathered on the porch when Stephen stepped outside. They were gazing intently down the valley to the westward at the glorious afterglow in the sky, where, but an instant before, the red rim of the sun had flashed before dipping behind the hills. All were silent with that quietness which is brought forth by moments of absolute beauty. Loring's step and voice aroused them, and all save Jean turned quickly. Baird saw a color in Jean's cheeks far richer and softer than the deep rose hue in the skies. He glanced quickly from her to the man standing above her, who was looking down at her with adoration in his gaze. For

one second his love for the girl battled with his friendship for the man, and Radlett realized the full bitterness of the sacrifice that he was making. Then friendship conquered, and he comprehended and sympathized with the sorrow which to-night made Loring's face look singularly old.

Stephen stayed with them only a few minutes before returning to the office to play the old, old game of burying thought beneath routine.

Radlett and Jean were left alone on the steps. Baird watched Stephen until he was hidden by the angle of the office.

"Loring," he said suddenly, turning to Jean, "has been working fifteen hours a day for the last six months. He cannot stand it. I am afraid for him."

"Afraid for his — for his —" she hesitated a moment, "for his health?"

"Yes, and only for his health," answered Radlett decisively. He rose to his feet as if to gain strength for what he was going to say. Then he seated himself again on the step beside her. Drawing a deep breath he began: "Jean, you are not looking well, either."

Jean murmured something about the fatigue of the journey from the East.

"No," said Radlett firmly, "it is not that. It is something deeper than that. You know it is, and I know it, too, so let there be no concealments between us!"

"What do you know? How do you know it?" Jean stammered.

"A man knows some things by instinct," Radlett answered. "I think I should have found this out before long, anyhow; but your face, dear, is not good at concealments, and when I saw your eyes, which had been sad from the time we met in Tucson, suddenly light at the sight of Loring in the office here, when I heard the little catch in your voice (Jean, I know every tone of your voice by heart) and when I saw and heard you, I knew!"

"Oh, Baird!"

"Never mind," exclaimed Radlett, "we will not talk of that any more. I only wanted you to understand that we must be quite frank with each other, and that thus everything will come out right. Now tell me how things stand with you."

"How can I, Baird? To you, of all people?"

"You can and you must, just because I am I and you are you, and your happiness concerns me more than anything in the world. You love Stephen Loring. You are miserable about him. Why?"

"I will tell you," answered Jean slowly, looking intently out into the darkness. "I will tell you why I am afraid for him, because you are his friend as you are mine, and you will understand. I am afraid that it is only for my sake that he has made his reform, and I told him to-day that I did not quite trust him, and that — oh, Baird, you must understand!"

Radlett bowed his head in grave assent. "Yes, I understand."

"But," Jean went on, "if you think that this will cause him to fall again, I cannot bear it; for Baird, I do care for him, and if this is his last chance, I will give it to him."

Radlett grasped her hand firmly in his own and bent over her. No crisis of his life had ever taxed his self-control like this.

"Jean," he said slowly, "he does not need you. Do you suppose that if he did I should think him worthy the great gift of your love?" Baird's voice broke, in spite of himself; but he

controlled it and went on: "Stephen has fought his fight and won it as it must be won — *alone*. Do you know what he has been since he left your father? Do you know of the way he behaved in that fight in Mexico, of the way in which he has saved the mine here, of the strength, the powers, the self-discipline that he has shown. It must be something stronger than his love for a woman that will save such a man as Loring, when he has once started down hill. Stephen had that 'something stronger.' God help him, it cut to the bone! Since that accident, Loring has never been quite his old self. I am afraid he never will be, that he will always be under a cloud, but Jean, it saved him. He has won his fight without you, and for that reason he is worthy of you." Baird felt the fingers in his own tighten in their grasp. "Jean," he went on, "you know how I have cared for you ever since we were children, and how, although you did not care," he cut short her protestation quickly, "and how although you did not care in that way, I love you now above anything on earth."

The tears gathered hot in Jean's eyes.

"You know that as I told you a moment ago

your happiness is the highest thing in the world to me, and I say to you: if you love Stephen, marry him. If you do not love him, then I am sorry for him, but I am not afraid for him. I am proud of him."

"He must be a man, Baird, to have such a friend as you."

A deep silence fell between them. Then Radlett rose suddenly, for he knew his endurance could stand no more. He bent over her hand and kissed it tenderly. Then with a heart-rendingly cheerful "good night," he strode off into the darkness towards his quarters.

For an hour Jean sat on the steps, watching the lights of the camp, as one by one they were extinguished, until one light alone burned. It was in the window of the office. There she knew a man was working steadily and bravely, and her heart beat irregularly as the realization came, that it was the man whom with her whole heart she loved and trusted for all the future, whatever might have been the past. The hot blood came surging into her cheeks only to recede and leave them pale.

Rising, she walked slowly across to the office. She hesitated a moment, her hand on the door-

knob, then throwing back her head proudly, she opened the door softly and entered. Her bearing was that of a soldier who surrenders without prejudice to his pride.

Loring was bending over his work and did not see her as she stood in the doorway. She watched his pen toiling over the paper before him. The drooping dejection in his whole attitude cried out to her of his need for her.

"Stephen!" she half whispered.

The man jumped to his feet, startled by the sound of the voice of which he had been thinking. He turned to her, his face white and tense with the strain of wonder and surprise. In three steps he crossed the room to her.

"Is anything wrong?" he exclaimed anxiously.

"Yes, something is wrong," she answered, looking steadily into his eyes. "I was wrong. I told you that I did not trust you. I do."

"Jean," he gasped, half suffocated. "Do you mean that after I had broken my word to you at Quentin, you could possibly forgive?"

"I forgave that at the time."

His face was drawn with the conflict between an impossible hope and a desperate fear.

"That was the only time in my life that I ever broke my word, Jean, but breaking it to you made it impossible for you to believe in me. You told me so this morning, and I realized it. You forgive me that now," he cried, with a sudden flash of intuition, "because you are afraid that in losing you, I shall lose myself again. Jean, though you are all there is in life for me, I will not let you sacrifice yourself to your splendid sympathy. Dearest, can't you see that, as you said, if there were a shadow of doubt on your mind you could never be happy with me?"

"It was not what you think which made me say I did not trust you. It was something, Stephen, which I know would be impossible in the man you are now. I could not put your dishonesty to your guardian out of my mind, until I realized that that was no more a part of the Stephen Loring I know now than the faults which I had forgiven."

Loring looked at her in amazement. "My dishonesty towards my guardian?" he exclaimed. "Jean, dear, what do you mean?"

"I was told," she said sadly, "that you had borrowed heavily from him, and never returned

the loan; but we can pay it back together," she went on bravely.

"Jean, every cent that I ever borrowed, I paid him when I came into my own money. I don't know or care where you heard the story, but the only part of it that is true is that I did abuse his good nature and ask him to advance me out of his own fortune the amount that he held in trust for me." The impossible hope conquered the fear in his face. He seized both of her hands in his and spoke breathlessly.

"Jean, dearest, was that why you did not trust me?"

She looked up at him with her eyes glowing with a new feeling. The love that had sprung from pity had grown into the love based on pride.

"Do not let us talk of that now," she whispered, "but of the present — and — and the future!"

Stephen drew her to him with a passion which only those who have despaired can feel. He bowed his head and kissed her as for months he had dreamed of doing. He trembled violently as his lips met hers; trembled with wonder, with adoration, with perfect happiness.

He held her tightly in his arms, as though afraid that all was not real, that he might yet lose her, as if he drew strength and life from the heart that beat against his own.

The present redeemed the past and glorified the future. Through sin and shame, through failure and humiliation, he had at last found his strength, and before him in golden promise stretched the up grade.